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PHILIPPINES

THE MAIDEN ISSUE

morena icons

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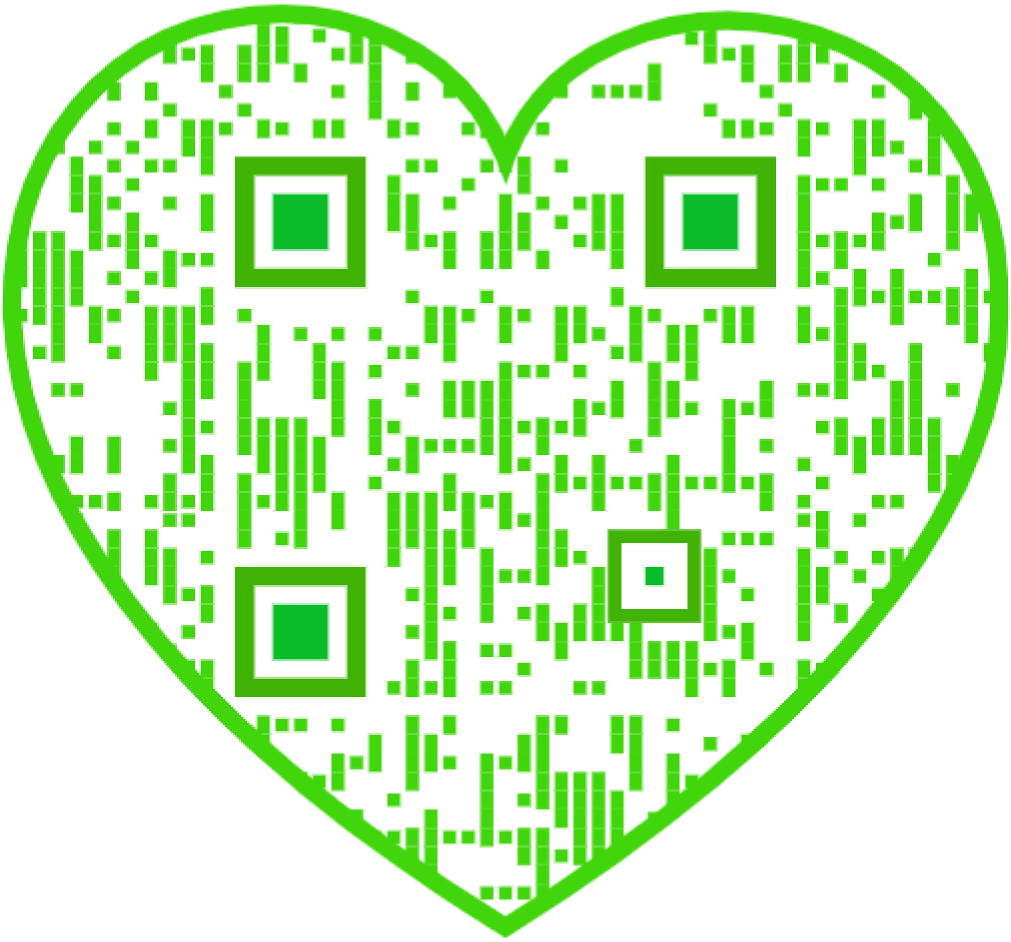
IZA CALZADO, TWEETIE
DE LEON-GONZALEZ,
MYLENE DIZON,
WILMA DOESNT,
BIANCA GONZALEZ
& AGOT ISIDRO

THE FILIPINO *NOW*

Heart Evangelista & Bretman Rock



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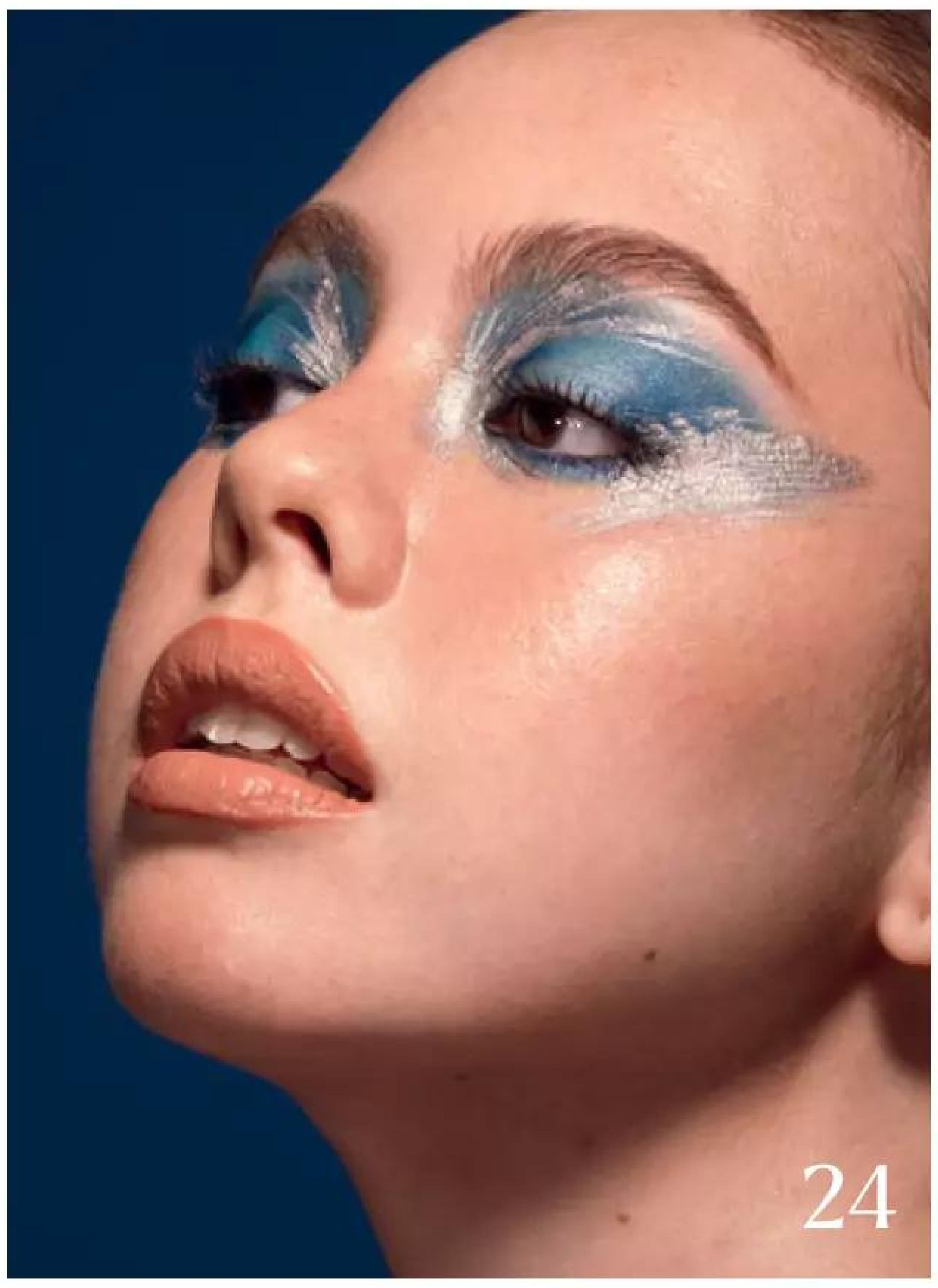

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PHOTOS (L TO R): JOSH TOLENTINO, KARLO CADANG, MARK NICDAO, BJ PASCUAL, ANDREA GENOTA, JOSH TOLENTINO

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Four words you'll never see in *Allure*—and why.
These iconic *Allure* covers redefined beauty.

WHERE *beauty* FINALLY LOOKS *like us*

If you had told my younger self that I'd one day be writing this letter—as the first Editor in Chief of *Allure Philippines*—I wouldn't have believed you. Not because I didn't dream big, but because back then, I didn't see anyone who looked like me at the center of beauty.

I was a morena girl in an industry that told us to lighten up, blend in, stay out of the sun. I didn't listen—I made space. As a model, I challenged old standards by embracing exactly who I was. As a columnist, I started conversations others avoided. As an entrepreneur, I built something better, creating products that celebrated, rather than concealed, who we truly are. As an author and a mother, I saw how beauty shapes identity, and how deeply it weaves itself into culture and self-worth. And as a UN Women champion, I saw beauty's power to uplift but also witnessed how it could exclude, erase, or dictate.

When *Allure*—the world's most trusted beauty authority—came knocking, I knew exactly what I wanted our edition to be: a mirror, a megaphone, and a movement.

As the third global edition following *Allure US* and *Allure Korea*, and proudly the first in Southeast Asia, *Allure Philippine*s arrives with unparalleled authority and a distinctly Filipino voice. We stand on the shoulders of a media brand known for decades of editorial excellence, yet we're here to continue a legacy of expert-backed, intelligent, inclusive journalism that educates, empowers, and informs. Because this isn't just a milestone—it's a mission.

Allure Philippines isn't just about what's trending—it's about what's true. Yes, we love transformative lipsticks, swoon-worthy packaging, and breakthrough ingredients. But we're here to do so much more: to shift the lens, question inherited ideals, and champion beauty that's honest, expansive, and proudly our own. We're retiring outdated narratives and putting center stage the shades, shapes, and stories long overlooked.

This debut issue is proof.

Inside, you'll find the stories I've always longed to see in beauty media. Our cover story—*The Filipino Now: Made for the World*—features two global forces: Heart Evangelista and Bretman Rock. Two different journeys, one powerful message: Being Filipino isn't a limitation. It's a superpower.

You'll also discover *The Morena Manual*, an *Allure Philippines* exclusive section I personally championed to be part of our editorial DNA. It's part guide, part manifesto—and a wholehearted celebration of morena beauty, intentionally created for skin tones that have been sidelined for far too long. We proudly spotlight morena icons and morena achievers—trailblazing Filipinas who have broken barriers and prove that success and beauty come in every shade.

Editorial integrity is our north star. Trust that every recommendation, every tip, every story has been vetted for truth and relevance. If we say a product is great, it's because we genuinely love it—not because we've been paid to promote it. In a world oversaturated with quick takes and paid praise, our pages remain a trusted space for honest, expert-driven beauty journalism. We do the research, consult the experts, and test everything ourselves so you can make informed choices with confidence.

What others may view as a feather in my cap, I view as a responsibility I carry deeply—as a woman, a Filipina, and especially as a mother raising two daughters. I truly believe that what we consume shapes who we become, so here's my promise: Everything you'll find in *Allure Philippines* will be guided by integrity, purpose, and heart. We're not here just to sell beauty—we're here to investigate it, challenge it, and celebrate it. Together.

Thank you for holding this first issue in your hands, or scrolling through it online. We hope to earn a place not just on your coffee tables, but in your conversations, your causes, and your lives. This isn't just a new magazine; it's the start of a movement—one that changes not only how beauty is seen but how it's defined.

Welcome to *Allure Philippines*.

Where beauty meets truth.

Where purpose meets power.

And where beauty, finally, looks like us.

Rissa

Rissa Mananquil Trillo
Editor in Chief

PHOTO: **ARTU NEPOMUCENO**

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Your ultimate beauty cheat sheet—covering the latest in skin care, makeup, nails, fragrances, and industry icons—straight from the Philippines and around the world.

The secret behind every sun-kissed morena in our pages: **Chanel Les Beiges Illuminating Oil.** Weightless yet decadent, it melts into skin for an impossibly luminous glow.

PHOTO: **EXCEL PANLAQUE**

high FIVE

A standing ovation for international beauty brands that celebrate morena skin. **BY RISSA MANANQUIL TRILLO**

Long before stepping into this role, many of these were already personal favorites. From formulas that flatter deeper tones to campaigns that put Filipina beauty front and center, these global players are finally getting the memo—brown is beautiful.

clé de peau
BEAUTÉ

Clé de Peau Beauté Concealer in Ochre
Fellow brown beauty Kim K swears by this shade, and honestly? Same. This cult-fave concealer is the A-lister's secret to eight hours of sleep because it blurs, brightens, and doesn't budge—SPF 25 PA+++ included.

hudabeauty

Huda Beauty Easy Bake Loose Baking & Setting Powder in Ube Birthday Cake
Ube, but make it beauty. This lilac hue was made to pop on medium to tan skin with olive undertones—brightening without the dreaded white or ashy cast.

Hermès H Trio Healthy Glow Mineral Powder in Sienne
As if the sun kissed you on purpose. A luxe veil of warmth that leaves morena skin lit from within—think sunkissed, not sparkly.

jour et nuit - day and night
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émulsion
écologique
formule avancée
ecological
compound
advanced formula

Sisley Paris Ecological Compound Advanced Formula
Hyperpigmentation, who? This skin-strengthening icon acts like a daily multivitamin—calming, balancing, and always showing up for morena skin.

la prairie
SWITZERLAND

La Prairie Pure Gold Radiance Eye Cream
Golden skin deserves golden care. Infused with real gold, this luxe eye cream brightens and smoothens. And the refillable jar? A quiet flex in sustainable beauty.

MANANQUIL TRILLO: COURTESY OF SUBJECT. PRODUCTS: COURTESY OF CLÉ DE PEAU, HERMÈS, LOOK AT ME (HUDA BEAUTY), AND RUSTAN'S (LA PRAIRIE AND SISLEY).

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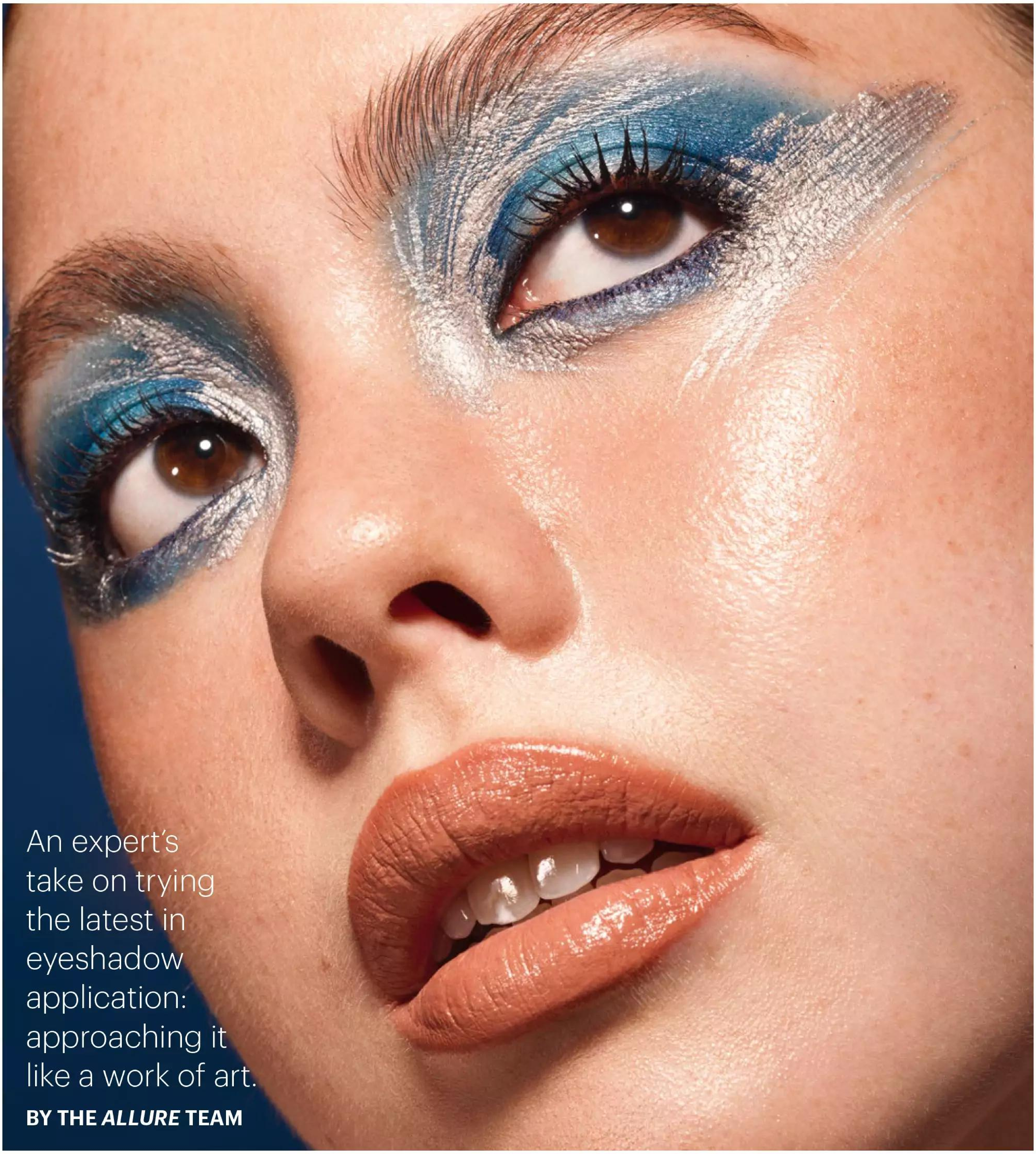

An expert's take on trying the latest in eyeshadow application: approaching it like a work of art.

BY THE *ALLURE* TEAM

"Painterly" is what we call the technique, and just like any art form, it helps to start with the right tools. As with all the greats—DIY is a must. For the eyeshadow base, makeup artist Booya used the blue shades in the **Kiko Milano Glamour Multi Finish Palette in Blue Variations**. Then she crushed the silver pigments from the same palette and used the **BYS Glitter Fix Primer** to "create a liquid metallic texture." She continues, "I cut out some bristles of a flat brush to make it more sparse, and I used that to apply the silver pigment. That's what gives the eyeshadow a streaky, painterly look."

PHOTO: **JOSH TOLENTINO**, ASSISTED BY ROJAN MAGUYON. MAKEUP: BOOYA. HAIR: JA FELICIANO. MODEL: SOPHIA SANTAMARIA OF PMAP.

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[1] Lilium Candidum Flower Extract, Glycerin.
[2] Skin Intelligence is skin's innate ability to distinguish between positive and negative stimuli, to achieve and maintain its ideal condition.
[3] Clinically tested by 34 women.
[4] For Radiant Lily Concentrate, clinically tested by 51 women.
[5] Renewed refers to improved radiance, plumpness, and fewer fine lines. Clinically tested by 34 women.

Pressed *for* TIME

The quickest way to get a makeover without the commitment? Press-on nails.

BY THE *ALLURE* TEAM

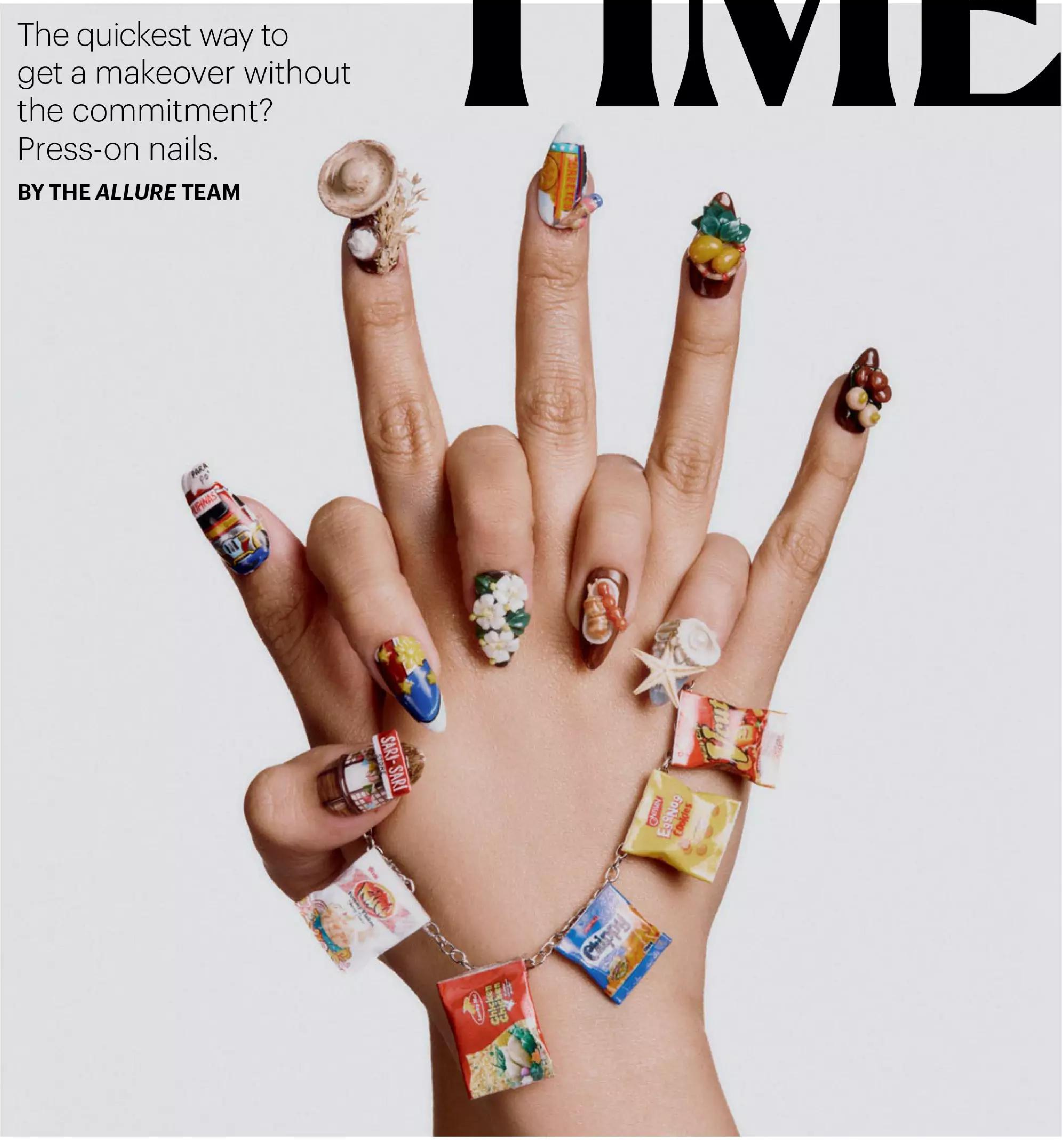

PHOTO: **ANIKEN DELA CRUZ**

Endlessly customizable and ridiculously instant, press-ons are making manicures feel as effortless as getting dressed. For some of the most eye-catching sets in Manila, **Eli Nails** and **Nails by Nica** stand out for their artistry and attention to detail. Their designs take inspiration from Filipino heritage—think intricate embroidery, woven textures, and modern interpretations of traditional patterns. Whether you lean minimalist or maximalist, prices range from PHP 800 to PHP 5,000, making these press-ons statement-worthy and accessible.

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THE BEAUTY BIBLE that empowered *generations*

For many readers, *Allure* is more than just a magazine. This is how *Allure* made its mark on the lives and careers of these Filipino beauty experts. **BY BIANCA GOZON**

VICKI BELO, MD

DERMATOLOGIST AND CEO OF BELO GROUP OF COMPANIES

I've always seen *Allure* as my unofficial partner in beauty. *Allure* does a really good job at keeping up with the newest in aesthetics, and I appreciate how they dive into the science and do the research behind new treatments. Whenever *Allure* publishes a new article, I can already anticipate what questions my patients will ask. *Allure's* coverage sparks significant interest among my patients, leading to engaging clinic discussions. What I admire most about *Allure* is how they research procedures thoroughly and present them in an accessible, entertaining way. They break down complex treatments without medical jargon, reaching a wider audience. *Allure* not only educates doctors, but also empowers patients to make informed beauty choices.

JOYCE OREÑA

VOGUE PHILIPPINES BEAUTY EDITOR

Throughout my modeling career in the 90s, *Allure* has been a steadfast companion. I was based in Hong Kong at that time, and it became my primary source of all matters related to beauty. I made it a habit to read every monthly issue, often tearing out pages to save information and inspiration. I would also try out the products that captured my attention from the annual Best of Beauty awards—many of which remain my favorites today. The magazine provided comprehensive and insightful coverage of the latest advancements in beauty, skin care, health, wellness, and well-being. *Allure* has significantly transformed the conversation of beauty, establishing itself as a reliable and authoritative voice within the industry.

STEPHANIE VALENTINE (GLAMZILLA)

GLOBAL BEAUTY CONTENT CREATOR

I once thought "allure" meant you needed to be attractive, interesting, and exciting. But what it means to me now is the power to be all those things—and so much more. *Allure* has demonstrated that beauty is no longer just a look. It's a feeling, a moment, and something that resides within us all. Beauty is a space that has been redefined by people like you and me. Everyone has the power to feel beautiful in their own skin if they choose to.

MARINA SUMMERS

GLOBALLY-RECOGNIZED FILIPINO DRAG QUEEN

Beauty and fashion magazines were a profound source of queer joy for me growing up. Flipping through magazines like *Allure* helped me discover and embrace my own kind of beauty. Its striking, dramatic covers showed me that strength is beautiful—and that beauty has no single definition. *Allure* also made me feel connected to a larger world that celebrates all forms of self-expression. That understanding continues to shape my drag and fuel my creative collaborations today.

COURTESY OF SUBJECTS

AIVEE AGUILAR TEO, MD

DERMATOLOGIST AND FOUNDER AND MEDICAL DIRECTOR OF THE AIVEE CLINIC

Allure has influenced both my personal and professional journey. As a trusted authority in beauty, the magazine offers a comprehensive perspective—celebrating innovation, diversity, and the importance of self-care. As a board-certified dermatologist, I appreciate how *Allure* provides valuable insights into global beauty trends and evolving standards. While I draw inspiration from various industry-leading resources, *Allure's* dedication to highlighting cutting-edge products and treatments deeply resonates with me. This shared passion for innovation continues to inspire me to provide the best solutions for my patients.

JELLY EUGENIO

CELEBRITY MAKEUP ARTIST

Allure is beauty. Beauty is *Allure*. As a makeup artist for over a decade, I've always relied on *Allure* for the best in products, trends, and forecasts. This is a historic moment—having a beauty authority in the Philippines feels incredibly special. I'm thrilled for this iconic brand that celebrates beauty in all its forms.

DENISE GO-OCHOA

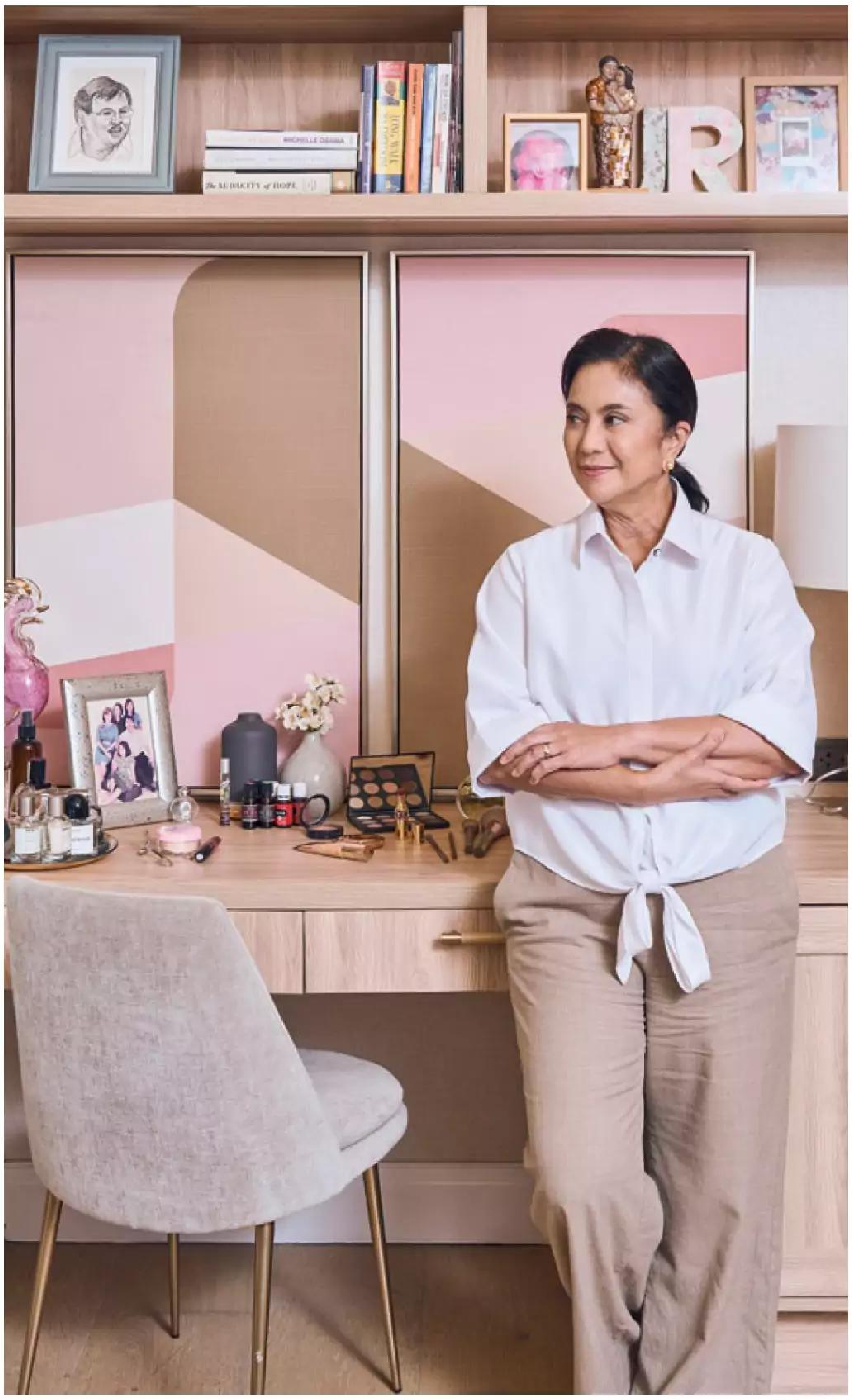
CELEBRITY MAKEUP ARTIST

When I started out 26 years ago, the internet wasn't widely accessible. Back then, *Allure* was my primary source of inspiration and education as a budding makeup artist. I eagerly flipped through every page, learning about trends, techniques, and beauty tips—it was my gateway to beauty. I had a huge collection of *Allure* issues and I treated them like treasures. They were my go-to resource for client references, especially while building my portfolio. The diverse editorials pushed me to think outside the box and explore the stories behind makeup. Looking back, I realize how much *Allure* has influenced my career, shaping both my craft and my view of beauty as a transformative, personal experience. The way it celebrated individuality and beauty in all forms inspired me to have a similar philosophy in my work. It taught me that makeup isn't about perfection, but about expression, confidence, and empowerment.

ISSY
BEAUTY MADE EASY

IN HER *element*

In this issue's Vanity Table, former Vice President Leni Robredo invites us into her home in Naga City, where scent, skin care, and simplicity shape her daily rituals. **BY LARISSA JOSON. PHOTOGRAPHED BY KIERAN PUNAY.**



We're welcomed by former Vice President Leni Robredo in a manner that's simply, so very her. Even with her hospitable team around, it is Robredo herself who greets us, opening the white wooden door to her living area with a smile that reaches her eyes. After six years in the capital serving in the country's second-highest office, being home in Naga is always a "grounding" experience, she shares. And the moment we step inside, we understand why.

The air carries a soft, soothing scent—a signature of her home. Essential oil diffusers and reed sticks are tucked into corners, filling the space with refreshing notes of peppermint, eucalyptus, and citrus. Her latest favorite? A linen spray from Amparo's Apothecary, a homegrown brand from Baguio City she recently discovered at the Katutubo Pop Up Market, which brings together the best local brands. "Scent is so important to me," she says. "For self-care, I am a big fan of essential oils."

Over breakfast, she shares another side of herself—one not often talked about in public. Her journey into beauty and skin care began later in life, only truly embracing it at 50. "I used to just wash my face," she laughs. It was her niece, dermatologist Gaile Robredo-Vitas, MD, who convinced her to start a proper routine, including using sunscreen.

Makeup, too, came into her life unexpectedly. Unlike most who start with lipstick or powder, her first-ever product was eyeshadow—an essential in her early days as a public defender at the Public Attorney's Office. "My eyes are deep-set, so a touch of color made me feel more put together for court," she recalls.

One product, however, has become a signature: Rouge Dior Lipstick in 782. It was originally a gift from a friend, but after falling in love with its shade, she made sure to track it down whenever she could—often asking friends or family to pick up extra tubes when traveling. And while all her daughters share an interest in beauty, it's her youngest, Jillian, with whom she bonds over makeup the most.

Her life's work has always centered around people, and as it turns out, so does her vanity table.

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In Robredo's perfume collection, you'll find a few heritage names, but even if she isn't familiar with the brands themselves, she remembers the exact friend or supporter who gifted them.

Byredo Bal d'Afrique Eau de Parfum, Chanel Chance Eau Fraîche, Gucci Bamboo Eau de Parfum, Le Labo Rose 31 and Santal 33 Eau de Parfum, Lancôme Idôle Eau de Parfum, Miss Dior Eau de Parfum, Kenzo World Eau de Parfum.

"For self-care, I am a big fan of essential oils. My favorites are peppermint, lavender, and Thieves."

Bath Origins Pure Essential Oils, Young Living Essential Oils, Pili Ani Essential Oil Blend in Sweet Dreams.

Makeup is one of the ways she bonds with her children, especially with her youngest, Jillian, who introduced her to one of her current favorite brands, Charlotte Tilbury. "My day-to-day makeup look is simple," Robredo says. "I just reapply my lipstick when needed."

MAC Art Library Nude Model Eyeshadow Palette, MAC Sheertone Blush in Gingerly, Charlotte Tilbury Beautiful Skin Foundation in 6 Neutral, Charlotte Tilbury Airbrush Flawless Finish Setting Powder in 2 Medium, YSL Rouge Volupté Shine in 129 Carmine Retro, Maybelline Volum' Express Hypercurl Mascara, Dr. Sensitive All Day No Sebum Blur Powder in Natural.

LENI ROBREDO'S 7 BEAUTY PRINCIPLES

1. To get everything done, her non-negotiable is waking up early. "No matter how late I've slept the night before, I am usually awake by 6:00 or 7:00 AM. I am guilty of checking my phone first thing in the morning, since the quiet allows me time to gather my thoughts and leave instructions to my staff as needed. There is a lot of work to do, whether it's our regular engagements with stakeholders and communities, speaking engagements, or, during times of disasters, relief and rehabilitation operations."

2. She keeps her daily prep time to an hour or less. "I understand that part of my job is to look decent and presentable, but I only allow myself about an hour for preparation, since I usually have a long day ahead of me. After a quick shower, I prepare to leave the house with just a basic makeup look and a ponytail."

3. Being Vice President changed her perspective on beauty. "As the highest-elected woman in government at that time, I understood that everyone would pay extra attention to my physical appearance. Coming to work looking decent and put-together was my way of showing respect for the position I held."

4. Still, she knows that it's what's on the inside that truly matters. "Cliché as it may sound, it is true that beauty radiates from within. Perhaps this is why we usually find ourselves drawn to people who have a positive outlook. It makes a lot of difference when someone goes through life with kindness and warmth."

5. She ends her day as quickly as she starts it. "When I get home at night, I take off my makeup, hop in the shower, do skin care, and put on fresh clothes. I use the nighttime to catch up with my children. Being 'unready' is already a luxury after a busy day."

6. Her skin care routine is derm-certified. "My niece, Gaile, is a dermatologist, and she explained to me that it's more important to look at the composition of a product rather than to look for a specific brand. In the morning, I wash my face using a mild cleanser. This is followed by a dab of toner, vitamin C serum, moisturizer, then sunscreen. I do the same routine in the evening, but I double-cleanse using a gel cleanser first, apply a thin layer of tretinoin after, followed by a serum, then moisturizer."

7. Her favorite beauty base is definitely a unique choice. "Having the right attitude towards life serves as a good 'base' for anyone. Be kind and try not to sweat the small stuff. I tend not to respond to negativity, because I feel it is counter-productive. My work is already hard enough, so, whenever I have the choice, I gravitate towards positive people and experiences."

> "My work is already hard enough, so, whenever I have the choice, I gravitate towards positive people and experiences."

fragrance UNBOTTLED

Scent is becoming more immersive, personal, and long-lasting. Here's how fragrance is breaking free from the bottle.

BY THE *ALLURE* TEAM

HERMÈS BARÉNIA PERFUMED BODY CREAM
If skin could sip on luxury, it would indulge in this. The cream melts into the body like second skin, infused with the warm, leather-inflected elegance of Hermès. Smooth onto collarbones, shoulders, or legs before heading out—a quiet flex, no shimmer needed.

LUSH SLEEPY DUST DUSTING POWDER
Sleep doesn't come in a bottle, but this is the next best thing. The powder is a whisper-soft blend of vanilla, tonka, and calming lavender, designed to soothe both skin and senses before bed. Sprinkle on sheets, the décolletage, or even the backs of your knees before bed for a subtle, dream-like scent that lingers through the night.

LE LABO HAIR MASK IN HINOKI
Think of this hair mask as a fragrance that moves with you. It doesn't just soften strands—it envelops them in the crisp, meditative scent of Japanese cypress, evoking the stillness of a temple surrounded by towering trees. Swap this in for your daily conditioner—damaged or color-treated hair will drink it up.

JO MALONE WOOD SAGE & SEA SALT BODY & HAND WASH
The scent of fresh sea air, bottled. This body wash doesn't just cleanse—it turns your shower into a windswept coastal escape. Pair with a body lotion in a complementary scent for a fragrance that stays with you all day.

DIPTYQUE DO SON REFILLABLE SOLID PERFUME
This solid perfume isn't just a scent—it's a ritual. Inspired by the enfleurage technique, the balm is meant to be warmed between your fingertips before pressing it onto pulse points. Perfect for discreet reapplications: one gentle touch behind the ear, and you're instantly wrapped in its floral embrace.

AESOP MARRAKECH INTENSE PARFUM ROLL-ON
It's wanderlust distilled into a scent. One swipe on the wrist, and suddenly you're in a bustling Moroccan souk, walking through an intoxicating swirl of spice and smoke. This one's bold, so just dab a little on pulse points and let it work its magic. No need for constant reapplication.

MAISON FRANCIS KURKDJIAN AQUA UNIVERSALIS COLOGNE FORTE SCENTED SOAP
There are soaps, then there's this Francis Kurkdjian-creation that turns an everyday ritual into a sensorial experience. It's clean, but never sterile—like fresh linen sun-dried on a summer afternoon. For a longer-lasting scent, follow up with a fragrance-free moisturizer to lock in the notes.

PHOTO: KARLO CADANG

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ASC No. J0016P071024A

meet the EXPERT

Filipina cosmetic scientist Joyce de Lemos traded beauty giants for an indie brand rooted in integrity and innovation.

BY SASHA LIM UY MARIPOSA

COURTESY OF SUBJECT

Joyce de Lemos is the highly-trained boffin behind Dieux Skin, a New York-based indie skin care brand that started in 2018. She describes herself as a "mad scientist" and "cosmetic cook," but behind the casual labels, she's established by years of education and training—from a Master's degree in cosmetic science to experience in global beauty giants like L'Oréal and Cosmax. This, ironically, makes her one of the rare product developers with legitimate scientific expertise, setting the standard in an industry where many hold the title without the credentials. There may be many ways to approach product development, but for de Lemos, it's about creating groundbreaking formulations that push the industry forward.

In the first *Allure Philippines*' Meet the Expert series, we explore what truly defines a cosmetic product developer with de Lemos. She shares her journey, the science behind her formulations, and her vision for the future of skin care.

Can you walk us through your background in biochemistry and cosmetic science?

I loved science from a young age and I received my Bachelor's degree in biochemistry from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, a university in California known for its STEM programs. At 21 or 22, I was making big money, taking my parents to fancy restaurants, doing all that stuff. After five years, I came home thinking, this sucks. This is so boring, I'm not curious, I don't want to do this anymore. It was the rise of the internet, so I Googled what I could do with a biochemistry degree. In 2010, I moved across the country to pursue my Master's in cosmetic science. Here is where I learned about something called "colloid chemistry." Essentially, it's the chemistry of how to mix different substances that are normally immiscible (or not combinable into one phase) and stabilize them among each other.

How did this formal education shape your approach to product development, and how do you apply your scientific knowledge when creating formulations?

I'll explain using the chemistry of mayonnaise. The main ingredients are oil, vinegar, and egg yolk—it acts as a binder or what we call an emulsifier. This stabilizes the mixture, making two formerly immiscible ingredients mixable!

That's an example of one type of chemical knowledge that I apply when formulating products. But instead of oil and vinegar, we're working with humectants, water-binding ingredients, preservatives, oil-based emollients, and butters with complex structures. My understanding of how these ingredients interact with each other is what has enabled me to create formulas that are stable and also elegant in texture.

This is one part of the equation. The other part of the equation is an understanding in skin physiology. What's skin made of? During my Master's, I studied skin composition and physiology. In order to understand how to create products that will benefit the skin, it's helpful to know what skin is made of, what its life cycle is, and what causes wrinkles, hyperpigmentation, and scars.

Where did you hone your cosmetic acumen? How did you get started in the industry?

I first worked at L'Oréal as a contract employee. When you work as a contractor for a French company, they keep you as a

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contractor. On my last day, I wrote them like a bleeding-heart letter that [said], 'Hey, I moved here from California. I'm really interested in the company. I've learned so much. I see there's a position open. Would you consider me for an interview?' That's how I got hired. From an education perspective, more programs are available. Fifteen years ago, there were only three programs in the United States. I chose the one next to the coolest city, which is New York.

What were the most valuable lessons from working in global beauty corporations like L'Oréal and Cosmax that you apply to your work at Dieux?
At L'Oréal, I learned how to work cross-functionally with so many different teams to launch a product. You get to see the entire process from ideation to formulation to clinical testing, and production. Timelines were a bit longer, so we were given adequate time to get to know our formulations and products. Conversely, at Cosmax, I learned how to move at the speed of light. We were asked to reverse engineer products all the time with two-week turnarounds. If we didn't present something to a potential client quickly enough, we'd lose the partnership to another contract manufacturer. It was intense, but I also learned how to be a more efficient formulator, creating and testing multiple iterations all at one time, while still focusing on delivering quality formulations within a very short timeframe.

The beauty industry has seen a rise in self-proclaimed skin care experts and "product developers" with no scientific background. How do you think this affects consumer trust and product quality?
I'm sure, like any vocation where there are self-taught experts, there are some great, knowledgeable product developers out there that make quality products. I will say though that without a foundation rooted in chemistry and skin physiology, it would take a self-taught product developer a lot of time, practice, trial, and error to become an expert.

In the Philippines, the term "product developer" is often used loosely. Many local "product developers" act more as intermediaries between brands and suppliers, and this is why a lot of local releases end up similar to each other. How does your expertise differ from those who simply coordinate with suppliers?
What sets my approach apart from those who simply coordinate with suppliers is my understanding of the processes involved and required from both the brand and the contract manufacturer, all through the lens of my cosmetic science background. I understand gaps in the market and the importance of innovation and new technologies. I also know what's feasible from a scale-up perspective—it might be doable to create one small experimental unit of a formula in a lab, but you might not be able to reproduce 100,000 units of that same formula. All the while, my understanding of cosmetic chemistry allows for me to assess if the formula is being compromised from a chemistry standpoint.

How did Dieux start?
Char (Charlotte Palermino, Dieux's co-founder) came up with the idea in 2018. I'd already worked at L'Oreal and Cosmax, which makes all the Korean skin care brands you know. We met at the top of 2019 and in 2020, once the research and development for one of our flagship products was done, I wanted to sign on. We became co-founders. We also have a third co-founder, Martha Friedman, who focuses on design.

Can you break down the process of developing a new skin care product—from concept to final formulation?
When ideating, we ask ourselves: How is this product different and better from anything else that's already on the market?

We're constantly combing the globe for innovations in ingredients, formulation textures, packaging, and clinical-testing techniques. From the very beginning of drawing up the concept, it has to have something that sets it apart from the rest. After that, the formulation process begins. When I formulate, it's very much like building a house. I focus on the main priority—the texture—which is ultimately the foundation and groundwork of the house.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 186

JOYCE DE LEMOS AND CHARLOTTE PALERMINO, CO-FOUNDERS OF DIEUX SKIN.

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CROWNING **GLORY,** *reimagined*

Cream Silk's newest campaign redefines what it means to be a queen—crowning a generation of Filipinas leading in their own unique ways.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY RXANDY CAPINPIN

THIS SPREAD: QUEENS OF THE ARENA. ATHLETES KIANNA DY, ALENNA DAWN, BETHANY TALBOT, AND KAIZEN DELA SERNA

The Philippines may not have a monarchy, but Filipinas have long worn invisible crowns—breaking barriers, leading boldly, and making waves on the global stage. Once reserved for royalty or beauty queens, the term queen is now being reclaimed by a new generation of women who rise in every arena: from sports to the arts, from digital platforms to real life.

In the same spirit, Cream Silk launches its latest campaign with a fresh lineup of faces—women who embody what it means to reign with purpose, passion, and authenticity.

This generation of queens comes from all walks of life. The Queens of the Arena—athletes Alenna Dawn, Bethany Talbot, Kaizen dela Serna, and Kianna Dy—champion strength, resilience, and discipline. Whether sprinting, spiking, or training hard, their hair remains as strong and as unstoppable as their spirit, thanks to Cream Silk's expertly developed formulas designed for Filipino hair.

Taking graceful command as the Queens of Art and Movement are Ballet Philippines principal dancer Jemima Reyes and visual artist Kim Cruz. With every leap and brushstroke, they show that elegance and movement are powerful forms of self-expression. Alongside P-pop phenoms G22, they show how beauty thrives in artistry, expression, and fearless creativity. Boosted by beautiful, manageable hair—nothing stands in their way.

Meanwhile, the Queens of Statement—drag royalty Marina Summers, Minty Fresh, and Eva Le Queen—stand tall in bold beauty. With unapologetic presence, dramatic makeup, and strikingly colored hair that's resilient against damage, they prove that self-expression is a crown in itself.

In one of the campaign's most powerful moments, this generation of queens showed that crowns are passed—not taken—a simple yet striking gesture that reflects something deeper: This isn't about competition; it's about community. Proof that today's queens rise higher by lifting each other up. It's a nod to the campaign's shift in message: "They can achieve greatness, together."

At the root of every hair flip? Cream Silk's first-in-the-world technologies, made specifically for Filipina hair. Just like these queens representing the Philippines on the global stage, Cream Silk is proudly Filipino and powered by world-class technology. Each formula is engineered to deliver strength, softness, and unmistakable shine—for every texture, every lifestyle, and every woman choosing to define beauty on her own terms.

Because today's queens don't wait for a title. They claim their space, build their glow, and empower others to do the same.

Explore the campaign at @creamsilkph on Instagram and TikTok.

CREATIVE DIRECTION: CHRISTINA ZABAT. MAKEUP AND HAIR: GERY PENASO FOR KIANNA DY, ALENNA DAWN, BETHANY TALBOT, KAIZEN DELA SERNA, KIM CRUZ, AND JEMIMA REYES.

“No stages. No judges. Just women showing up as their full selves, with strength, style, and hair that speaks volumes.”

“Today’s queens don’t wait for permission. They build their glow, crown themselves—and uplift others along the way.”

THIS SPREAD: QUEENS OF ART AND MOVEMENT. VISUAL ARTIST KIM CRUZ, AND AJ, ALFEA, AND JAZ OF P-POP GIRL GROUP G22

MAKEUP: MARBEN TALANAY AND JAY SALCEDO. HAIR: JAY WEE. STYLING: ELDZS MEJIA.

QUEEN OF ART AND MOVEMENT. BALLET PHILIPPINES PRINCIPAL DANCER JEMIMA REYES

MAKEUP: EVA LE QUEEN (EVA LE QUEEN), TINY DELUXE (MARINA SUMMERS), MINTY FRESH (MINTY FRESH). HAIR: MARTHA AMETHYST (EVA LE QUEEN), GAB VILLEGAS (MARINA SUMMERS), LOISA MOROTA (MINTY FRESH). STYLING: EHRRAN MONTOYA (EVA LE QUEEN) AND ANGELA TOLOZA (MINTY FRESH).

> “Crowns are passed—not taken. Proof that today’s queens rise higher by lifting each other up.”

QUEENS OF STATEMENT. DRAG ROYALTY EVA LE QUEEN, MARINA SUMMERS, AND MINTY FRESH

THE FILIPINO NOW

Heart Evangelista and Bretman Rock embody a new kind of beauty icon—**Filipinos made to conquer the world.**

BY LIA CRUZ. PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARK NICDAO.

These pages: Fashion direction: Daryl Chang. Fashion assistant: Kurt Abonal. Beauty direction: Andrea Ang. Makeup: Memay Francisco (Heart Evangelista) and Booya (Bretman Rock). Hair: Mark Ghil Sayo (Heart Evangelista) and JA Feliciano (Bretman Rock). Fashion styling: Izabel Sim, assisted by Justine Riguer (Heart Evangelista) and Brian Meller (Bretman Rock). Special thanks to W Talent Management (Bretman Rock).
Clothing credits: Randolf Clothing top (Heart Evangelista and Bretman Rock). Cheetah Rivera skirt (Heart Evangelista).

Describing the Filipino is no easy feat. We are over a hundred million strong, spread across 7,614 islands, speaking eight major languages and over a hundred dialects. We come in different shades and shapes—warm and golden-toned, fair-skinned and sharp-featured, with eyes that tell stories of centuries past.

Long before "Filipino" was even a word, there were already traces of us—a skull fragment, some jawbones, and teeth discovered in the Tabon Caves of Palawan. These ancient remains dating back 16,500 years tell a quiet but powerful truth: long before human histories were recorded, the Filipino was already around.

But in written history, time and again, the Filipino has been billed the *conquered*—never the conqueror—colonized, exploited, and often told we were not enough. From 300 years under Spanish rule to a devastating world war, we've absorbed wave after wave of outside influence. And somewhere along the way, many of us were taught to look up to outsiders, and to look down on ourselves.

Even today, we wrestle with those ghosts—whether in the form of powerful political families at home, or employers abroad holding sway over our futures.

But, now—in a time where the Filipino has become a global citizen, with 10 million living abroad; where the Filipino diaspora has shared our culture and traditions with the rest of the world; where the average Filipino spends about four hours a day on social media and earns the country the unofficial title of "social media capital of the world," and underscores the virtual reach of the Filipino worldwide—perhaps it is time to turn the page.

The Filipino may come from a long history of being the *conquered*, but the Filipino *now* has found ways to move beyond the bounds of social, political, economic, and geographic constructs, to somehow escape the narrative of always being the underdog. The Filipino now is exploring uncharted territory, earning recognition worldwide in countless fields—beauty, fashion, entertainment, journalism, sports, science, business, food and beverage, art, and many, many more. The world no longer feels like such a big, scary place for someone from a little island nation in Southeast Asia, rather, it fits quite perfectly in the palm of the Filipino's hand *today*.

In this maiden issue of *Allure Philippines*—itself a whole new book upon which to write—we write a new story. Our two cover stars are the perfect embodiment of the Filipino now—rooted in their heritage, but at the same time, breaking boundaries and redefining what it means to represent the Philippines on a global scale. They are beauty icons in the most modern and relevant sense—bold, fearless, and unapologetically themselves.

Heart Evangelista and Bretman Rock. One is an international style icon and a true muse of beauty, luxury, and art. The other is a social media powerhouse, a beauty disruptor and an undeniable force of nature. They first met in person in 2022, at an Alessandra Rich show during Paris Fashion Week. Someone had been sitting in Bretman's seat, and Heart took action. "She was my ate, and told the person to 'Moooove,'" Bretman explains with flair. Heart, for her part, laughs and explains further, "I don't know if it's a Filipino thing, but we're overly polite. He was like, 'I'm sorry,' and was trying to explain [the situation], but I knew it was his seat. I know how that feels."

Their combined star power is on full display during our cover shoot, making the room hum with electricity. With an upbeat 90s R&B track setting the tone, photographer Mark Nicdao counts down each click of his camera aloud. Heart and Bretman, standing back to back, turn their heads in time to Nicdao's counts, changing their angles for each shot. They move in unison, as if in a choreographed bop that they've rehearsed before. They are two stars in alignment—with Nicdao's counts and with the pulse of the times.

Bretman is gay and a brown Southeast Asian immigrant. Heart represents a developing nation and barely stands over five feet tall. Their identities are rife with things immediately working against them on the global stage. And yet they have emerged as forces to be reckoned with, with an astonishing reach worldwide. Heart is a fixture at international fashion weeks, topping celebrity influencer lists, generating millions of dollars worth of media impact value and driving engagement for luxury brands through her social media posts. Bretman has been the first openly gay man to land on the cover of *Playboy*, and has collaborated with big names, such as Nike, Beyonce's Cecred, MTV, Wet n Wild, Crocs, and countless others. Together, they have a combined following of 35.3 million on Instagram, 26 million on TikTok, and 11.71 million on YouTube. Together, they represent a new breed of Filipino icons—born in the Philippines, but made for the world.

Our time as *conqueror* has begun.

> "The world no longer feels like such a big, scary place for someone from a little island nation in Southeast Asia, rather, it fits quite perfectly in the palm of the Filipino's hand *today*."

LOUIS
VUITTON
PARIS

> "So many Filipinos are leading the space nowadays. A lot of us were seen as side characters—now we're the main characters."

BOTH PAGES: LOUIS VUITTON JACKET (HEART EVANGELISTA). LOUIS VUITTON TOP AND JEWELMER EARRINGS (BRETMAN ROCK).

LOUIS
VUITTON
PARIS

> “The Filipino now truly holds on to their principles and their values, but breaks out of the mold.”

HEART *Evangelista*

GLOBAL STAR, FILIPINO SOUL

At the end of every Fashion Week, Heart Evangelista has a tradition. She, with her fans present, hands out coffee and snacks, sometimes Filipino desserts, to the legions of street style photographers camped out outside each fashion show to take photos of the stars.

It's a tradition that was born through the suggestion of her husband, Senator Chiz Escudero. Heart had shared with him three years ago that, after witnessing the photographers running to take shots under the sun, rain, and cold, she wanted to do something nice for them.

"A lot of them are my friends. When I'm waiting in line, some keep me company because they know I'm shy. And I grew up around cameramen and photographers. They're actually the unsung heroes of Fashion Week because they're the ones who put your photos in magazines. And if you're in the magazines, then your media impact value is high," she shares.

And so the tradition—admittedly a very Filipino thing—was born.

Heart, before landing on the global stage as a fashion and beauty influencer, as any Filipino knows, was a veteran of the Philippine entertainment industry. She started in local showbiz at the age of 13, acting in teleseryes, being a VJ on music channel Myx, and establishing herself as a household name. But Heart reveals that in all that time, she was never afforded the liberty of being her true self. Her true self was, she was told, too kikay, too high-end, too unrelatable, and she was asked to bury it to better fit into the tried-and-tested mold of what appealed to the masses. Even in school, she was bullied for what she was, and ate lunch alone in the bathroom. Later on, in the mid-2010s, after years in the business, Heart knew that her time in the industry had run its course. "I just kind of knew that showbiz was finished," she says. "I knew I was done and it was time to move on. I didn't know what to do. I started to paint." Heart's painting culminated in exhibits both here and abroad, and in commissioned paintings on pricey Hermes Birkin bags for local and international clients.

It was because of her painting that a friend in France invited her to the show of Schiaparelli in Paris. Heart, a known fashion lover, flew halfway around the globe, thinking it would be a good opportunity to meet people for her painting. She did meet people—the right people, who invited her back again. The invites kept coming, and multiplied, and before she knew it, even without intending to make it a career, she was attending every season.

But the fashion industry is cut-throat, and the limited seats are reserved for only the biggest names and the brightest stars. And even Heart, a full-blown celebrity in the Philippines, was unable to snag seats at first. "This was around 2015, 2016," she recalls. "Even the companies that were selling the brands here in the Philippines would have a hard time asking for seats for me, or for anyone, to watch."

A country like the Philippines is barely on the map for luxury brands. "We're not known to be a purchasing market," Heart explains. "Brands would ask, 'What's in the Philippines? Why do we need to give this person from there a seat?'" The Philippines just doesn't pull in the sales figures that would pique luxury brands' interests, plus consumers here who can afford luxury items usually purchase through a personal shopper based abroad. But this only underscores the incredible feat that Heart has pulled off. Despite the lack of numbers from the Philippines, in her words, "the gates are now open." Invitations are aplenty, and she has numerous regional and global collaborations and ambassadorships, including her present and past deals with Ferragamo, Mugler, Vone World, ION Orchard, Lancaster, Sequioa, among others, apart from a cavalcade of local endorsements. On the global stages of beauty and fashion, the name Heart Evangelista is one to be reckoned with.

Nowadays, Heart sashays through the streets of the fashion capitals with an ease that can be attributed to knowing she belongs there. And in a twist of fate, it's the public that didn't have the purchasing power in the first place, that helped her get there. "They [the brands] have seen that we have the numbers to create and generate interest, to generate traffic on social media," Heart points out. "Now, everybody gets to watch." She even mentions a movement her fans started, an effort to sell out items that she patronizes, posting online #heartmademedoit.

It's a staggering amount of power to behold, over a captive audience in a country casually baptized "the social media capital of the world," and the world is beginning to see how valuable it is. "There's definitely been a shift," Heart agrees. "Thanks to social media, there are no more boundaries."

With this newfound power, if there's one thing that Heart would like to redefine about the global perception of the Filipino now, it's that we are pushovers. "Filipinos are always meek, sweet, kind, but we know how to fight. We know when to put our foot down," she says with conviction. "I think this is something that people should know. Filipinos are working here, there, everywhere. Because we're known to be mabait and to give over 100 percent for an employer, I feel like a lot of Filipinos are taken advantage of abroad. But may tapang tayo."

It sounds like a hard-won realization, coming from someone who also had to learn to stand on her own, as herself, not playing a role or fitting into a mold that was pre-selected for her, and to find power in her own truth. And now, it's a global stage that Heart is standing on, representing the Phililppines, yes, but also representing the most truthful version of herself. "I still get very nervous, especially with big crowds or an audience," she shares. "But I've been through so much to get to this point, that I have to take a deep breath and just enjoy it. I have to speak for the little girl in me, because she deserves it."

NERIC BELTRAN DRESS. PANTHÈRE DE CARTIER PAVÉ BRACELET. JUSTE UN CLOU CARTIER DOUBLE PAVÉ BRACELET. CLASH DE CARTIER PAVÉ DOUBLE ROW BRACELET. CLASH DE CARTIER PAVÉ NECKLACE.

"I've been through so much to get to this point—I have to take a deep breath and just enjoy it."

PREVIOUS PAGE: MICHAEL LEYVA CUSTOM GOWN. JEWELRY COURTESY OF SUBJECT. THIS PAGE: DRESS: LOUIS VUITTON DRESS. BALMAIN TWEED CROPPED JACKET. CLASH DE CARTIER PAVÉ NECKLACE. CARTIER TRINITY PAVÉ CUSHION RING.

SANDRO DE LA PENA ASYMMETRICAL TOP

RAJO LAUREL PLEATED COVER-UP AND TIFFANY & CO. ELSA PERETTI LARGE BONE CUFF.

BRETMAN *Rock*

QUEER, FILIPINO, UNSTOPPABLE

There are tears pooling at the edges of Bretman Rock's eyes. He has just wrapped up his cover shoot for *Allure Philippines*, and he is talking about his beloved grandmother Lilang, and the emotions—and tears—eventually overrun him to the point that he has to pause the interview.

"My grandma means so much to me," he says, dabbing at his eyes with a tissue. "I became her shadow from the ages of two to seven. I would always watch her put on makeup before church." As someone who got his start as a beauty influencer, these moments with his grandmother, who was so openly accepting of her gay grandson, would prove to be pivotal. Bretman writes in his memoir, *You're That Bitch*, that his first taste of makeup was when Grandma Lilang dabbed his cheeks with some red blush. To this day, he remembers her and "her blush and three Revlon lipsticks," when doing his own face.

"I think I'm like this," he says, explaining the tears, "because I am home. *Home-home.*" Home, for Bretman, has been Hawaii since he moved there at the age of seven, but *home-home* is still here in the Philippines.

Bretman Rock Sacayanan was born on July 31, 1998 in Sanchez-Mira, Cagayan, into a typical close-knit Filipino clan, in a typical rural Filipino home filled with chickens, pigeons, and quail. His mother and two siblings moved to Hawaii when he was three, leaving him in the care of his father, grandmother, and extended family. His childhood was idyllic, rooted in local traditions and customs, and, most importantly, an affirmation of acceptance from a loving family. From the beginning, they quietly accepted the fact that Bretman was gay, never questioning it or ostracizing him. It was on this unconditional acceptance that the unapologetic confidence that Bretman Rock would eventually go on to be known for, was built.

The distance though, between Hawaii and Sanchez-Mira, would prove to be too much, and in an explosive whirlwind of infidelity, violence, and vengeance that poor little Bretman was a firsthand witness to and details in his memoir, the family would be broken for good. His father fled to the mountains with his mistress, the housekeeper, and his mother would take Bretman, then seven, to Hawaii.

The immigrant experience is quite common for Filipinos. For Bretman, moving abroad meant that although life now had the backdrop of the "land of opportunity," at its core, at home, it was simply an extension of the Filipino culture and norms that they brought with them overseas. "We speak Ilocano at home," he shares, relaxing in his chair in the glam room, his eyes now dry. "In my head, my thoughts are English-Ilocano." He says that the most valuable trait he inherited from his parents is the Filipino work ethic. And with Filipinos everywhere in Hawaii, Bretman never felt the need to assimilate. "The gift of Filipinos is that there's a community everywhere you go, whether it's online or in person."

Being Filipino remains at the heart of Bretman's identity, but he doesn't just speak to Filipinos. Bretman is an icon who transcends boundaries. He is a champion of the queer community, an immigrant and person of color subject to prejudice like so many others. At a time where the term "representation" has become a byword, Bretman represents many minorities who draw strength from the power he radiates at the forefront, in a space he has worked so hard to claim as his own.

"I feel that in the beginning, I was just hired so brands could feel good about fulfilling a diversity quota," he says. Things have obviously changed. His accolades are numerous—*Time*'s 30 Most Influential Teens, *Forbes'* 30 Under 30 Asia, a People's Choice Award for Beauty Influencer, *Variety*'s Power of Young Hollywood, an MTV reality show, a YouTube Originals series, a *Playboy* cover, a Nike campaign, copious lines and collaborations with beauty and fashion brands, even a stab at voice acting and a new podcast entitled *Da Baddest Radio*. "Now," he says, "I'm not just a last-minute addition so the campaign looks diverse. I'm the first one they think of. A lot of us Filipinos are taught to make ourselves smaller for others. But you got to shove your way to the front, and say 'Look at me.'"

And the world is looking. Bretman is an icon, someone at the forefront of the movement for inclusivity and representation. For Filipinos all over the world, he has become a source of pride, and a shining example of the heights one can achieve. But in breaking boundaries and effecting radical change, he doesn't overthink it. Nothing is calculated. "I don't think I intentionally push boundaries. I just am."

He is Bretman Rock. He is queer. He is an immigrant. He is a person of color. And he is Filipino. On the global stage, each component of his identity should have been a strike against him. And yet, he says that these supposed drawbacks are where he draws his power. "I'm so tired of thinking that what made me different were setbacks. I have influence, because I am gay. I have influence, because I'm brown. I'm moreno and I'm Filipino. Those are my superpowers."

CHRIS DIAZ BLAZER. JEWELMER NECKLACE AND EARRINGS.

THIS PAGE: BALMAIN JACKET. CLASH DE CARTIER RING, BRACELET, AND NECKLACE. NEXT PAGE: DENNIS LUSTICO TOP AND SKIRT. TIFFANY & CO. CUFF AND RING.

"I have influence because I'm gay. Because I'm brown. Because I'm Filipino."

PHOTO: **ANDREA BELDUA.** MAKEUP: JIGS MAYUGA. HAIR: BRYAN EUSEBIO. MODELS: SABINA GONZALEZ AND ANNA PANTHERA OF PMAP, SOPHIA AGUADO, AND ALYSA ESPONILLA.

the MORENA *manual*

A space where morena beauty is celebrated, not sidelined. From expert skin care and makeup made for Filipina skin to cultural conversations, this is your guide to embracing and owning your natural glow—across all shades and ages.

KODAK GPX
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GPX 6
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GPX 11

perfectly matched

Forget generic shades—your perfect foundation starts with knowing your undertone. Here's how to master the match and bring out the best in morena skin. **BY MARBBIE TAGABUCBA**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANDREA BELDUA

At *Allure Philippines*, we know that morena skin is stunning in every shade, and makeup artist Jigs Mayuga agrees. With nearly two decades of shaping the beauty landscape in the Philippines, he's all for breaking rules—except when it comes to your base.

"When it comes to colors, there are no hard and fast rules," he says. "But for foundation, you have to get your undertone right."

SKIN TONE VS. UNDERTONE: WHY IT MATTERS

Your skin tone is the shade you see in the mirror—the one that tans under the sun or lightens when you stay indoors. But your undertone? That's the deeper hue beneath your skin, the one that never changes. And that's what makes all the difference when choosing foundation, concealer, and color correctors.

Then there's another question: Do you match your foundation to your face, neck, or chest? Mayuga prefers the chest for a seamless look, especially for morenas whose skin tones naturally shift across different areas.

Instead of an all-over foundation application that can make morena skin look flat, Mayuga strategically color-corrects according to your undertones and in thin layers, building up as needed. He custom-mixes products to match the skin's natural depth, balancing warmth, coolness, and any uneven tones—no filters or retouching required. Read on and learn how he does it for your undertone.

HOW TO FIND YOUR UNDERTONE

For our very first Makeup Masterclass, we'll guide you through identifying your undertone with three simple tests. The Vein Test is a quick way to check—if your veins appear green, you likely have a warm undertone; if they're blue, you lean cool; a mix of both suggests a neutral undertone. But what about olive undertones? This category, common in Filipinas, sits closest to neutral but with a distinct greenish hue. The Vein Test alone often isn't enough to pinpoint it.

Another trick is the Jewelry Test—gold jewelry tends to complement warm tones, while silver flatters cool undertones; if both suit you equally, you're likely neutral. Finally, try the White Background Test by standing against a plain white surface. If your skin appears golden, you have a warm undertone; if it leans pink or blue, you're cool; and if there's a greenish cast, you likely have an olive undertone. Once you've decoded your undertone, it's time to find the makeup shades that will enhance it best.

These pages: Makeup: Jigs Mayuga. Hair: Bryan Eusebio. Models: Sabina Gonzalez and Anna Panthera of PMAP, Sophia Aguado, and Alysa Esponilla.

WARM UNDERTONES

The golden glow most people associate with morenas? That's actually just one piece of the spectrum. If your skin naturally tans golden like Sabina Gonzalez, you likely have warm undertones. The good news? Most beauty brands already cater to this shade range, making foundation shopping easier. Mayuga's tip: Enhance—not mask—your warmth by neutralizing any coolness under the eyes and play up warm skin's golden hue.

COOL UNDERTONES

Cooler morena skin—like Anna Panthera's—has hints of pink or blue. The wrong shade of foundation can make it look too warm or even ashy. Mayuga's rule? Avoid anything overly yellow or orange. To tone down any redness, Mayuga recommends a blue corrector instead of the popular green to better complement your undertone.

NEUTRAL UNDERTONES

Neutral and olive undertones are often lumped under one category, but the difference is especially noticeable on morena skin. Neutral undertones are not just simply between cool and warm—they can actually have both cool and warm tones throughout their complexion, something that Sophia Aguado had to learn to even out with bronzing. When they're at their palest, the yellows in neutral undertones can appear. Mayuga recommends neutralizing it with lavender and purple primers for a quicker fix.

OLIVE UNDERTONES

If you're a morena and grew up hating foundation for always appearing too ashy or too yellow on you, chances are, you are an olive-toned morena like Alysa Esponilla, who had to learn how to mix her foundation from many other mismatches to even out her skin from hyperpigmentation. Mayuga's approach to olive-toned morenas is to correct ashiness and grayness, while letting the skin's natural bronziness shine through.

you have
WARM UNDERTONES IF...

✓ Your veins appear **GREEN**

✓ You look best in **GOLD JEWELRY**

✓ Your **SKIN APPEARS PEACHY OR YELLOW** against a white background

PRO ARTIST PICKS

1. Laura Mercier Tinted Oil-Free Natural Skin Perfector SPF 20 in Bisque is a lightweight tint that evens out the skin. **2. Teviant Velvet Drop in Sex Appeal** has a peachy flush that complements golden tones. **3. Laura Mercier Translucent Loose Setting Powder in Translucent Honey** keeps shine at bay. **4. Dior Backstage Eye Palette in 003 Warm Essentials** is a warm-toned palette that takes you from soft glam to bold looks.

you have
COOL UNDERTONES IF...

✓ Your veins appear **BLUE OR PURPLE**

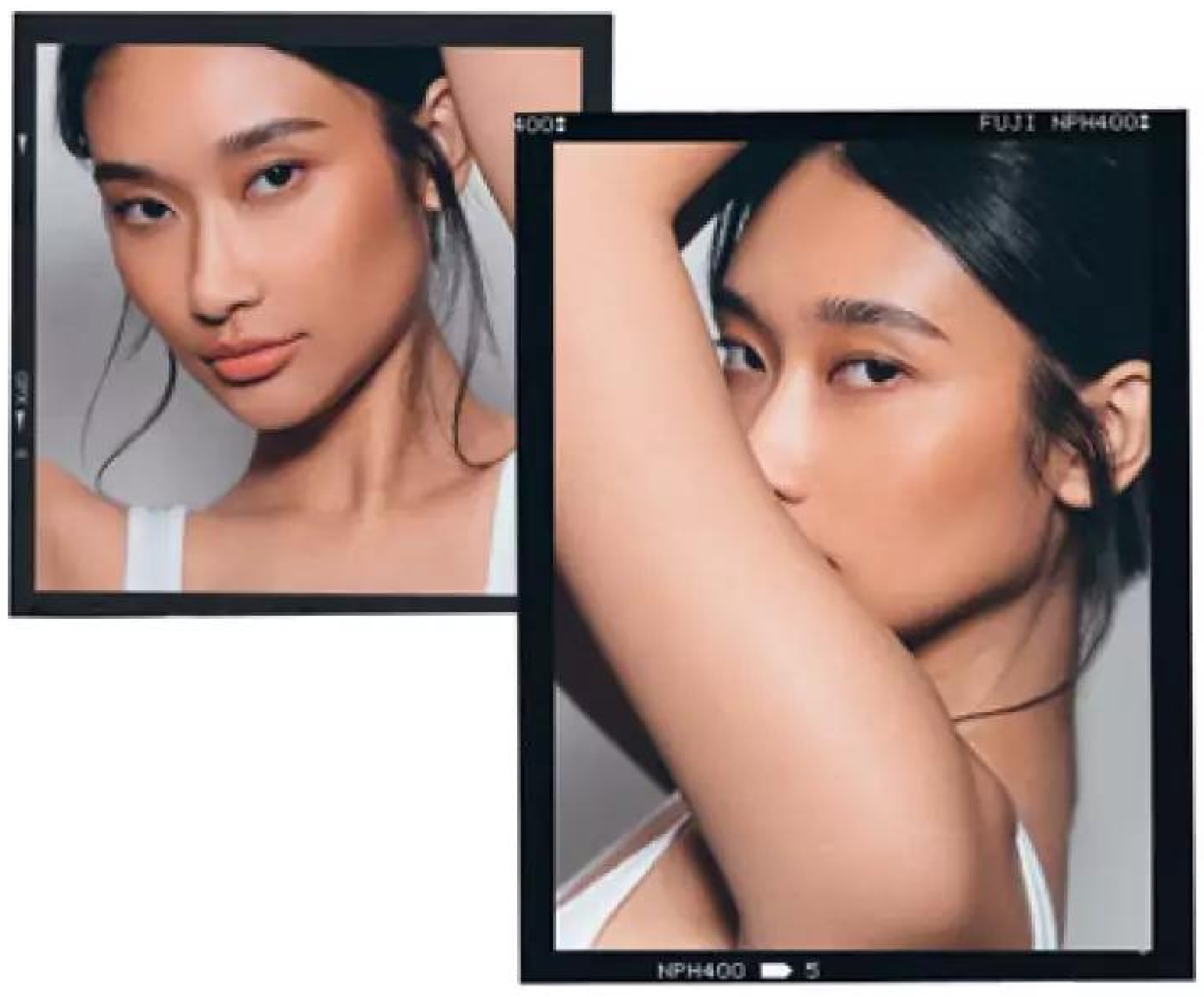
✓ You look best in **SILVER JEWELRY**

✓ Your **SKIN APPEARS PINKISH OR BLUISH** against a white background

PRO ARTIST PICKS

1. Patrick Ta Major Sculpt Crème Contour and Powder Bronzer Duo in She's Sculpted is the right shade of gray for cool skin. **2. Tom Ford Shade and Illuminate Radiance Enhancer** has a peachiness that counteracts blue tones is the eye area. **3. Make Up For Ever Artist Color Pencil in 506 Endless Cacao** is a true cool-toned lip liner. **4. Elf Cosmetics Camo Color Corrector in Blue** neutralizes unwanted redness.

PRODUCTS: COURTESY OF BRANDS. CICAPAIR, ELF, HUDA BEAUTY: COURTESY OF LOOK AT ME.



you have
NEUTRAL UNDERTONES IF...

- ✓ Your veins appear both **BLUE OR PURPLE** so it can be hard to tell them apart
- ✓ You look best in both **GOLD AND SILVER JEWELRY**
- ✓ Your **SKIN APPEARS MORE GREEN THAN BLUE** against a white background

PRO ARTIST PICKS

1. Make Up For Ever Step 1 Face Primer Yellowness Neutralizer evens out any excess warmth. **2. One Size Ultimate Blurring Setting Powder in Ultra Pink** adds a natural rosiness to neutral skin. **3. Dr. Jart Cicapair Tiger Grass Color Correcting Treatment** soothes redness while evening out skin tone. **4. Makeup By Mario SoftSculpt Shaping Stick** has the perfect balance of warmth and coolness.

you have
OLIVE UNDERTONES IF...

- ✓ Your veins appear **GREENISH-BLUISH**
- ✓ You look best in **GOLD JEWELRY**
- ✓ Your **SKIN APPEARS GREENISH OR GRAY** against a white background

PRO ARTIST PICKS

1. Make Up For Ever Step 1 Face Primer Grayness Reducer cancels out ashy tones. **2. MAC Lip Pencil in Whirl** is a morena favorite, and opaque enough to color correct the lip line. **3. Huda Beauty Easy Bake Loose Baking & Setting Powder in Kunafa** balances olive skin's greenish undertones. **4. GRWM Cosmetics Radiance Tint Color Corrector in Medium Peach** brings warmth back to olive skin.

The Science *of* Melanin

What makes morena skin unique?

BY LEIRA AQUINO

As a kid, you probably wondered why some people have darker skin, like your tita with her rich brown complexion (a morena), while some have paler skin, like your cousin with her fair, porcelain-white skin (a mestiza). Over time, you learned that the answer lies in genetics... and later, you probably discovered, or at least heard, about another important factor that's associated with skin color: *melanin*. But what exactly makes morena skin stand out?

To get to the bottom of this, *Allure Philippines* reached out to two experienced Filipina board-certified dermatologists: Ada Atilano-Bautista, MD, the head dermatologist at Profero Ageless Aesthetics and a fellow of the Philippine Dermatological Society, and Erin Tababa-Santos, MD, a dermatopathologist with over a decade of experience. With their help, we're going to decode the science behind melanin.

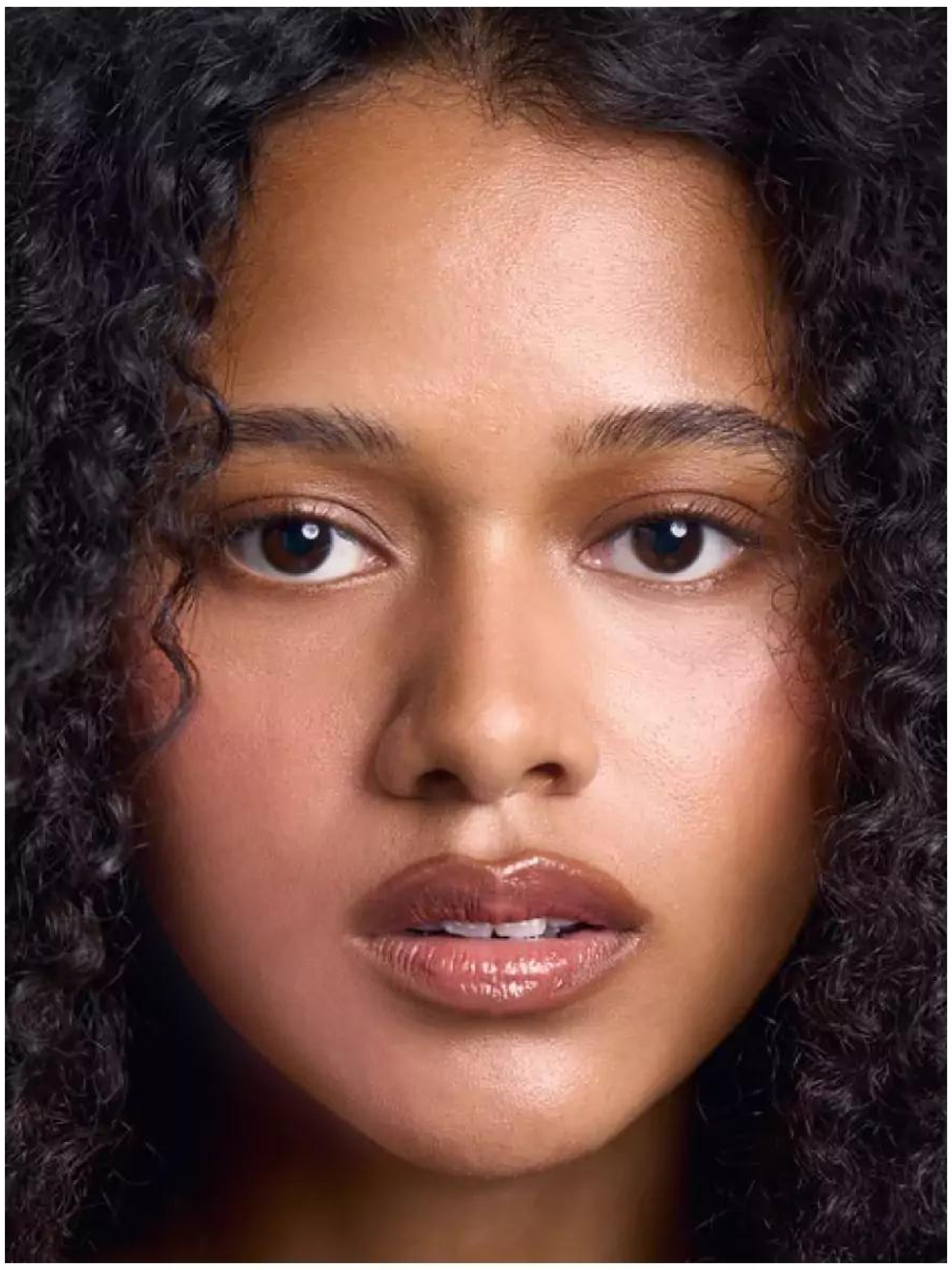
PHOTO: **KIERAN PUNAY**. MAKEUP: KENRIC CARPIO. HAIR: JAARON GO. MODEL: ALIAH CANILLAS OF MERCATOR.

WHAT IS MELANIN AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Let's start with the basics: What role does melanin play in giving morena skin its unique hue? "Melanin, produced by melanocytes in the epidermis, determines our skin color," explains Dr. Atilano-Bautista. You've probably heard someone say, "Your melanin is popping!"—a compliment aimed at rich, brown skin. But melanin does more than just give our skin brown shades, Dr. Tababa-Santos says. It's a pigment that gives color to our skin, hair, and eyes. There are two main types: eumelanin, which gives brown-black shades, and pheomelanin, which gives reddish-yellow shades to the skin.

For example, brown hair is mostly made of brown and black eumelanin, while blonde hair has only a little brown eumelanin and none of the black type, as Dr. Tababa-Santos explains.

When it comes to morena skin, the secret lies in the high levels of eumelanin, Dr. Atilano-Bautista points out, which gives Filipino brown skin its distinctively rich, brown tone. This abundance of eumelanin not only gives the skin its radiance, but also acts as a natural shield against harmful UV rays from the sun.



MELANOCYTES: THE SKIN'S "MELANIN FACTORY"

To explain where melanin comes from, Dr. Tababa-Santos breaks it down: "The cells that make melanin are known as melanocytes and these are found at the base of the topmost layer of the skin," she says. Melanocytes are special cells in the skin that work like little factories, producing melanin. Think of them like chefs in a kitchen, cooking up the "ingredients" that give your skin its color.

When you spend time in the sun and your skin gets tanned or darker, that's actually your body trying to protect itself from the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. According to Dr. Tababa-Santos and Dr. Atilano-Bautista, the sun's UV rays are the main trigger for melanin production.

"UV rays stimulate the production of melanin as a protective mechanism. This is the skin's first defense against the sun," Dr. Atilano-Bautista explains. "Melanin absorbs the dangerous UV rays that can do serious skin damage."

Here's how it works specifically: When sunlight hits your skin, it triggers something called *melanogenesis*—fancy science talk for the process of making melanin. "The melanocytes transfer melanosomes to neighboring skin cells," Dr. Tababa-Santos explains. "Inside the skin cell, the melanosomes gather and form over the cell's nucleus (akin to an umbrella) to shield it from the UV rays of the sun."

To have a better idea of what melanosomes do, imagine them as tiny, shield-like protectors that move into the skin cells to block out harmful sunlight. It's like how you might grab an umbrella when it starts to rain. You don't want to get wet, so you use the umbrella to shield you.

MELANOCYTES AND SKIN COLOR: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

You might be wondering: Do people with lighter skin have fewer melanocytes? The short answer is: not really. Dr. Tababa-Santos reveals that the number of melanocytes is roughly the same across all skin tones. What makes the difference is the "number, size, and distribution" of melanosomes (as well as the type of melanin—either eumelanin or pheomelanin present). "Those with brown skin—like morenas—have larger and more melanosomes compared with people with lighter skin," she explains.

THINGS TO BE MINDFUL OF WHEN YOU HAVE MORENA SKIN

Now, let's talk about what makes morena skin special. Of course, there are some perks and some challenges that come with it.

THE BENEFITS

Better sun protection: People with more melanin, like morenas, are less likely to get sunburned and tend to develop a tan instead. "Morena skin is naturally more resistant to sunburn," says Dr. Atilano-Bautista.

Slower skin aging: Morena skin tends to age more slowly than fairer skin. Dr. Atilano-Bautista explains that "morena skin has a thicker dermis and higher collagen content, which helps keep skin elastic and reduces the appearance of wrinkles and fine lines."

Protection from skin damage: The increased melanin in morena skin acts as an extra shield from the sun's harmful rays, helping prevent photodamage (sun damage) that can cause premature aging and increase the risk of skin cancer. "There's strong evidence that melanin helps protect against skin cancer," says Dr. Atilano-Bautista. "Fair skin is 70 times more likely to develop skin cancer than darker skin."

THE CHALLENGES

However, like anything else, morena skin does come with challenges. One of which is that it can be more prone to dark spots after inflammation or injury. "Morena skin is more sensitive and reactive, making it prone to hyperpigmentation from even minor injuries or inflammation," says Dr. Atilano-Bautista.

While morena skin has its advantages, it's still crucial to protect it from the sun. And even though skin cancer is more common in fairer skin, anyone (no matter their skin color) can get skin cancer. So don't forget to wear sunscreen and take care of your beautiful skin. Using sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher can help reduce the risk of dark spots and sun damage. Remember, sun protection is key, and your morena skin deserves just as much TLC as any other skin tone.

healing THE DAMAGE

Reclaiming morena skin after whitening treatments is an ongoing process.

BY TISHA CAEDO

Before dermatologists, aestheticians, editors, and beauty gurus gave free skin advice on YouTube and TikTok, the only way to learn about beauty was through magazines and TV commercials. And if you were a Filipina millennial growing up in the 2000s, chances are you remember the likes of Nivea, SkinWhite, and Silka dominating glossy spreads and airtime. These brands weren't just selling moisturizers or lotions—they were peddling a promise: When a woman achieves "kutis malinis," AKA a fairer, lighter skin tone, she instantly becomes "more beautiful."

Back then, beauty brands didn't bother to learn about shade ranges or undertones. You were either light-skinned (or fair) or morena—there was no in-between. As someone who fell into the morena category, I quickly learned that my skin tone came with unsolicited comments. Relatives called me "sunog" or "black beauty." I didn't think much of it until those commercials made it clear: being morena was bad. Fair skin was the ideal. And as I got older, I learned that the reason why this was our prevailing beauty standard all boils down to colorism.

Colorism in the Philippines runs deep, rooted in a colonial history that spans centuries. Spanish rule and American colonization left behind more than just infrastructure, religion, and last names. They instilled a preference for lighter skin, equating it with wealth, beauty, and status. Going into colonialism's role in the Philippine skin whitening industry's success, a 2017 paper from *AUCTUS: The Journal of Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship* by the Virginia Commonwealth University shares that colorism is "attributed to the mistreatment of the native population, and the subsequent development of internalized oppression, colonial mentality, and an ingrained preference for white skin." In a 2021 TEDx talk, speaker Bianca Punzalan stated that "the sad truth of it all is that in the Philippines, having dark skin equates to being dirty, ugly, and poor."

SKIN WHITENING PRODUCTS SHOULDN'T BE TAKEN LIGHTLY

The societal pressure to conform to these beauty standards has led many Filipinos, including myself, to engage in skin-lightening practices, sometimes at the expense of our health. The best example would be unregulated glutathione IV drips, which are still frequently offered in skin clinics today. These so-called "vitamin drips" are not approved by the Philippine Food and Drug Administration. Board-certified dermatologist Bea Chan-Benavidez, MD, notes that while these drips are marketed as skin-lightening miracles, "there aren't enough studies to support its efficacy and safety as a skin whitening agent."

Board-certified dermatologist Gaile Robredo-Vitas, MD, seconds this, reiterating that "in 2019, the Philippine Dermatological Society released a statement enumerating their concerns about the use of IV [administered] glutathione for skin whitening." She ticks off the lengthy list of issues, which include: "lack of scientific evidence; serious health risks that include hepatitis, HIV, and life-threatening allergic reactions; the proliferation of unregulated products that may be counterfeit or contaminated; and risks from unqualified administrators."

PHOTO: **ANDREA BELDUA**. IMAGE COMPOSITION: ANDREA QUINTOS.

Yet, the demand persists, with many Filipinos willing to risk "damage to the kidneys, drug hypersensitivity, and being more at risk for blood-borne infections," as warned by Dr. Chan-Benavidez, in pursuit of lighter skin.

While I've never tried any form of skin whitening drip, as a pre-teen, I always had a whitening body lotion in my bathroom or a new skin whitening hack to try. I had a phase where I scrubbed my knees and elbows raw every day with a loofah because I thought they were too dark, following it up with a whitening body lotion to help "even them out." There was also a time I became so insecure about the dark stretch marks on my thighs that I convinced my parents to buy me an expensive whitening cream that was supposed to help reduce their appearance. I'll never forget mixing coffee grounds with calamansi juice and scrubbing my whole body with it a few times a week. The juice stung my skin and made my eczema worse. I was always experimenting with various products and methods to see which one would be the most effective at whitening my skin. Spoiler alert: none of them were.

As I learned through recent discussions with other morenas, I wasn't alone in these experiments. My cousin Victoria, an artist, also did a similar thing around the same age. "I used whitening soaps, lotions, and powder to whiten my face. The lotions and powders worked a bit, but obviously, my skin went back to normal if and when the sun hit me," she says. "I think the facial powders even gave me eczema on my neck. [I continued using them because] what mattered were the mental and emotional effects, especially since I was still going through puberty."

Justin, a PR specialist, started on lightening papaya soaps, kojic acid products, and whitening lotions as early as eight years old: "Some of these products irritated my skin, leaving me with rashes or dryness, but I kept going because I felt like I had to."

Viv, a lawyer, also started using whitening soaps and lotions as early as elementary school and has even taken glutathione supplements over the years. "I used those products for years and never achieved the end of the 'whiteness scale.' I truly thought that something was wrong with me, and I just had to keep going. I've had some bad reactions to whitening soaps that made the skin on my body dry and sensitive," she says. Even if they're not IV-delivered, glutathione supplements still need to be approached with caution, since there is "not enough robust clinical evidence to support the [whitening] claims," says Dr. Robredo-Vitas.

Looking back, it's no wonder why my skin often had numerous eczema flare-ups and rashes. In my pursuit to have skin as fair as Snow White, I was actually damaging it.

GROWING UP OPENED MY EYES

Things started to shift for me in college. In a new environment with new classmates and surrounded by people who cared more about passing classes, joining organizations, and watching the latest varsity games than whitening their skin tone, I began focusing on other things that mattered—like my grades, hobbies, and, yes, my mental health. Slowly but surely, I started to embrace my morena skin.

The global beauty industry's evolution helped, too, especially living in the digital age. More and more, we're seeing that "it's important to recognize that Filipino beauty is diverse, and fair skin is not the sole standard of beauty," says clinical psychologist Sarah Macaraeg, RPsy.

To be honest, regaining my confidence is an ongoing process, and I still have a lot of work to do. "Rebuilding confidence requires [regular] self-reflection and accepting that darker complexions are a natural part of one's genetics," says Macaraeg. "Engaging with people who promote self-acceptance can inspire a shift in perspective and a renewed sense of self-worth." While I do consume more content geared towards self-acceptance now, I sometimes can't help getting triggered when I see an ad or a billboard promoting skin whitening.

As recently as 2024, there was online buzz over SnowCaps' L-Glutathione billboard. The static ad stated, "Ang proud morena, di na iinom nito. Sa kuntento na sa skin, wag i-try." ("If you're a proud morena, you won't drink this. If you're content with your skin, don't try this.") I felt enraged over the ad at first and even questioned if it was a legitimate billboard. "Is this still really happening in this day and age?" I asked myself. But when the smoke cleared, I saw it for what it was: advertising. The brand and their marketing team wanted eyes on their product, and they got it. Only they know whether or not this campaign was successful.

While the beauty industry has come far, as Justin accurately says, it will still take "a lot of reprogramming to unlearn the beauty biases ingrained in the Filipino culture." These days, I'm more focused on my skin's health than its shade. Sure, the occasional whitening ad still stings, but I remind myself nothing looks better than confidence.

> "It's important to recognize that Filipino beauty is diverse, and fair skin is not the sole standard of beauty."

ask the EXPERTS

Filipino dermatologists share their best tips for morena skin.

BY LEIRA AQUINO

The doctors are in: *Allure Philippines* consulted four board-certified dermatologists for their top tips on taking care of natural brown skin, from managing sun exposure to tackling hyperpigmentation. If you're morena, you're in for a treat with expert advice straight from the skin pros themselves.

Let's meet the experts.

RAISSA FRANCISCO-PASION, MD

Board-certified dermatologist Raissa Francisco-Pasion, MD, is a fellow of the Philippine Dermatological Society (PDS) with 16 years of experience. Beyond clinical practice, she is also a lecturer, key opinion leader, and a trainer for injectables, thread lifting, and biostimulators. With a background in psychology as her pre-medicine program, she deeply understands the connection between skin health and mental health. "The skin is the largest organ of the body and skin conditions can have a significant impact on a patient's self-esteem and quality of life," she shares. For Dr. Francisco-Pasion, dermatology is more than just a profession—it's a privilege. "I am blessed to be able to do meaningful work that I truly enjoy and find great satisfaction in," she tells *Allure Philippines*.

GAILE ROBREDO-VITAS, MD

Board-certified dermatologist Gaile Robredo-Vitas, MD, another fellow of PDS, runs dermHQ in Makati and BeautiqueMD in Taguig. With years of experience and active membership in local and international dermatological societies, Dr. Robredo-Vitas stays on top of the latest dermatology and aesthetic medicine trends. She shares, "These connections keep me up-to-date with the latest developments in dermatology and aesthetic medicine, allowing me to introduce new treatments and techniques here in the Philippines." Dr. Robredo-Vitas' journey into dermatology began unexpectedly after a desire to pursue ophthalmology. However, her exposure to various skin conditions through medical missions steered her toward dermatology. "I realized the profound impact skin issues had on their lives," she says.

RAISSA FRANCISCO-PASION, MD

GAILE ROBREDO-VITAS, MD

ADA ATILANO-BAUTISTA, MD

FRANCESCA SY-ALVARADO, MD

COURTESY OF SUBJECTS

ADA ATILANO-BAUTISTA, MD
Board-certified dermatologist Ada Atilano-Bautista, MD, the head dermatologist at Profero Ageless Aesthetics, is a certified fellow of the PDS with more than 17 years of experience in both aesthetic and pathologic dermatology. Dr. Atilano-Bautista believes that understanding one's unique skin situation is essential for achieving better skin outcomes.

FRANCESCA SY-ALVARADO, MD
Board-certified dermatologist Francesca Sy-Alvarado, MD, another PDS fellow, brings a decade of experience in dermatology. After extensive training abroad in dermatologic surgery, lasers, and aesthetic dermatology, she applies international perspectives to her practice. Dr. Sy-Alvarado's motto, "Work smart, not hard," extends to skin care as she encourages using efficient and purposeful products. She advises, "Having a targeted skin care regimen with ingredients that are multi-purpose or [having] a single product that has multiple ingredients that address your concern is more effective than having a multitude of products that overlap with each other or do not support your goals."

Our experts answer morenas' top skin questions.

DO MORENAS REALLY NEED TO WEAR SUNSCREEN?

Sunscreen isn't optional, it's essential. "The need for sunscreen does not change because of one's skin type," Dr. Francisco-Pasion says. "We are all exposed to the same amount of UV radiation from the sun." Yes, the increased melanin in morena skin provides some natural protection against UV radiation, but that doesn't mean you can skip the sunscreen. Not now. Not ever. "While morena skin has more melanin, it does not protect against all UV damage," Dr. Robredo-Vitas explains. Along with sun protection habits like seeking shade and wearing protective clothing, sunscreen helps prevent hyperpigmentation, photoaging, and the risk of skin cancer. For Dr. Robredo-Vitas, it is a "non-negotiable part of skin care routines."

What type of sunscreen should you look for? "We should protect our skin with the daily application of a broad-spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30," Dr. Atilano-Bautista advises. That should be the bare minimum, but for extra protection, she suggests opting for tinted sunscreens containing iron oxide to shield against visible light, which can exacerbate hyperpigmentation concerns (AKA dark spots) for morenas. A great option is the Frezyderm Sun Screen Color Velvet Face Cream SPF 50+, a sunscreen that not only provides high SPF protection but also has a velvety, tinted finish to help even out the complexion. Dr. Atilano-Bautista also recommends reapplying every two hours, and wearing a hat and sunglasses. Keeping your skin safe from UV rays is the first step to maintaining a healthy morena complexion.

ARE OTC PRODUCTS ENOUGH TO ADDRESS HYPERPIGMENTATION?

Dealing with uneven skin tone or hyperpigmentation? You're not alone. As the experts explain, morena skin tends to be more prone to post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (dark spots) as the result of acne or any skin inflammation or injury.

The best and first crucial step is consulting your dermatologist before considering new products or undergoing in-clinic treatments, according to Dr. Sy-Alvarado. "The safest way to address pigmentation concerns is to see a board-certified dermatologist to determine the cause, address it through targeted treatments like topical brighteners and procedures like chemical peels and pigment lasers, and to prevent further worsening of the condition," she advises.

Dr. Robredo-Vitas also recommends the same approach. "Consult an expert in skin, such as a dermatologist, to get a proper assessment and tailored recommendations," she says. She also reminds patients to opt for in-clinic procedures like chemical peels or laser treatments done by a practitioner experienced in treating morena skin to minimize the risk of adverse effects.

To treat pigmentation, Dr. Sy-Alvarado believes it can be done by targeting various steps in melanin production. After talking to your dermatologist, the next step would be to look for a well-formulated product targeting different mechanisms in melanin production (e.g., tyrosinase inhibitors like arbutin combined with niacinamide and/or glycolic acid).

"You may also incorporate antioxidants like vitamin C and E into your skin care routine to neutralize free radicals caused by environmental factors," Dr. Sy-Alvarado says. A solid option is the Cetaphil Bright Healthy Radiance Perfecting Serum, which features 3-O-ethylascorbic acid (a powerful vitamin C derivative) alongside niacinamide and peptides to brighten and even out your complexion.

STRONGER SKIN CARE MEANS BETTER RESULTS FOR MORENA SKIN, RIGHT?

Nope, your skin care routine doesn't need to be harsh to be effective. For morena skin, mild, fragrance-free cleansers and moisturizers work just fine. This is "to prevent irritation, which can lead to dark spots," says Dr. Atilano-Bautista. "Morena skin is more reactive and prone to darkening, so use products with care."

Dr. Francisco-Pasion stresses the importance of using mild soap and cleansers that do not strip the skin of "essential moisture" in order to maintain a good skin barrier. "I always educate patients on the importance of maintaining a good skin barrier," she says. Skin barrier, the outermost layer of the skin, is basically the organ's first line of defense that protects it against external factors. When it is impaired, according to Dr. Francisco-Pasion, it is more prone to irritation, wounds, allergic reactions, and morena skin's number one infamous foe: post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation. So really, just as you need gentleness, your skin does, too.

Dr. Robredo-Vitas agrees: "Use products with ingredients that are gentle but effective in targeting skin issues," she advises. Examples include soap-free cleansers that preserve the skin barrier, exfoliants, antioxidants, tyrosinase inhibitors, retinoids, and moisturizers.

Tyrosinase inhibitors are, as the name suggests, ingredients that inhibit tyrosinase, a key enzyme in melanin production. In short: they prevent dark spots. A good example of a tyrosinase-inhibiting product is the Nivea Luminous 630 Anti-spot Advanced Serum, which contains thiamidol. According to a 2020 study, thiamidol is the most potent inhibitor of human tyrosinase among 50,000 tested compounds.

Meanwhile, Dr. Atilano-Bautista cautions to be careful with active ingredients like vitamin C or retinoids.

"Always introduce active ingredients gradually," she reminds. Start slow, and it's always best to consult your dermatologist for professional tips tailored to your skin.

DO I REALLY NEED TO USE FDA-APPROVED PRODUCTS?

Yes. Stick to Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved products and treatments—your morena skin deserves only the best. Avoid shady lightening creams and drips unless prescribed by your doctor. Dr. Sy-Alvarado supports this: "Going for safe and effective products and treatments that are FDA-approved with the guidance of a board-certified dermatologist also ensures results that do not compromise your overall health and your skin health." Her basic formula is simple: "The right treatment in the right hands for the proper indication."

1

DERMATOLOGIST TESTED ON SENSITIVE SKIN
Cetaphil
BRIGHT HEALTHY RADIANCE
Perfecting Serum
7x Power for bright radiant skin
GentleBright Technology™, Antioxidant C and Advanced Peptide
30 mL

1. CETAPHIL BRIGHT HEALTHY RADIANCE PERFECTING SERUM
A lightweight serum infused with a vitamin C derivative, niacinamide, and peptides to enhance radiance and even out skin tone. Its formula helps reduce dullness and dark spots.

2

NIVEA
LUMINOUS 630
ANTISPOT
ADVANCED DARK SPOT SERUM
PATENTED THIAMIDOL

1. NIVEA LUMINOUS 630 ANTI-SPOT ADVANCED SERUM
A targeted serum formulated with thiamidol, known for its ability to inhibit tyrosinase and balance melanin production. It visibly reduces the appearance of dark spots and uneven pigmentation over time, while helping prevent new spots from forming.

3

Frezyderm
Color Second Skin
50+
Sun Screen
Color Velvet Technology

3. FREZYDERM SUN SCREEN COLOR VELVET FACE CREAM SPF 50+
A tinted sunscreen with SPF 50+ that offers high sun protection and light, natural coverage. It gives a velvety finish and helps even out skin tone. The tint is designed to match different skin tones, covering imperfections while protecting against photoaging.

COURTESY OF BRANDS

BORN TO GLOW:

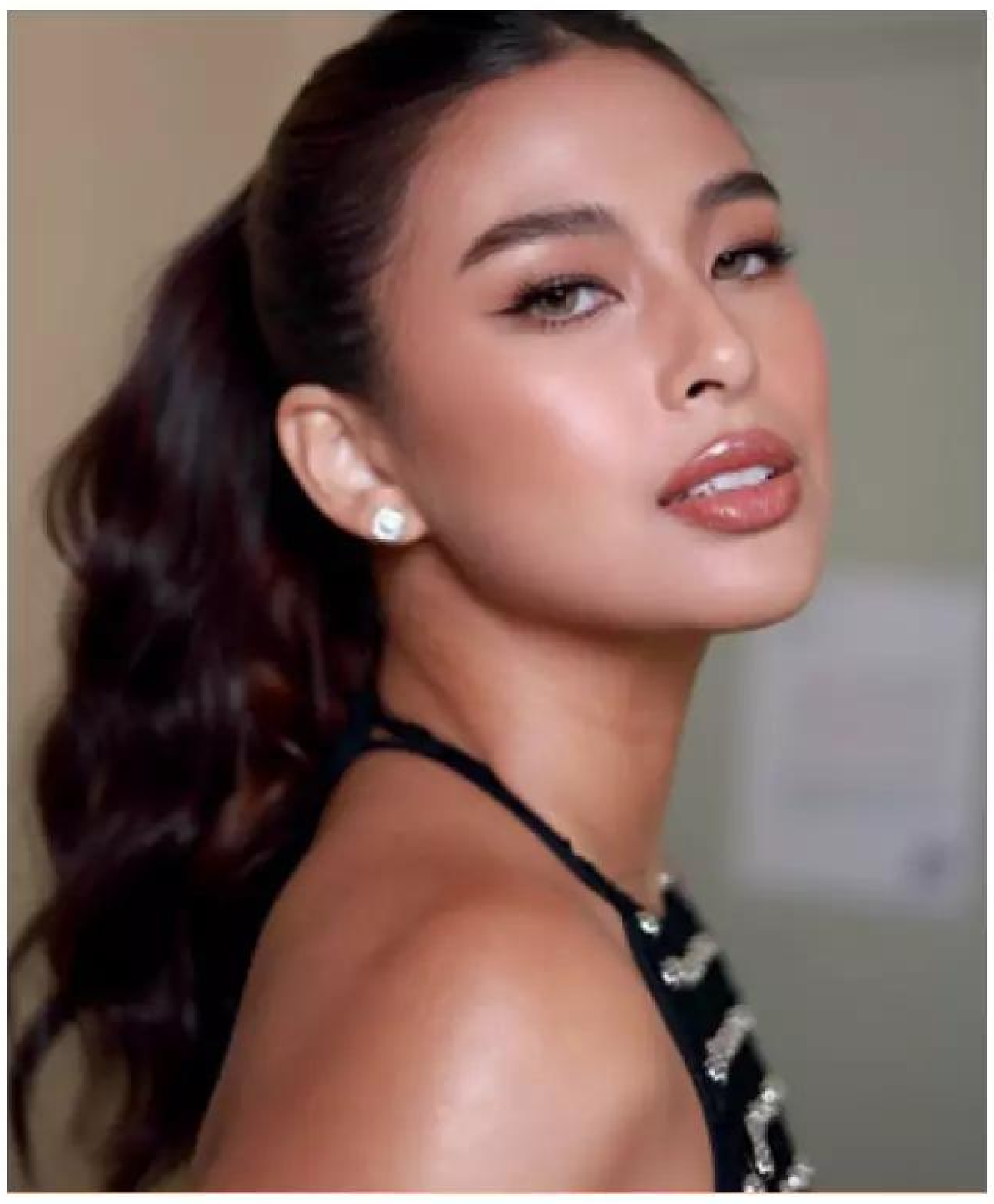
Beauty Staples of *Empowered Morenas*

Across generations, these women show how loving your morena skin is the ultimate form of beauty—and these are their favorite ways to do it. **BY THE *ALLURE* TEAM**

BUBBLES PARAISO

MODEL, ACTRESS, YOGA TEACHER, TRIATHLETE

As a proud morena, I love enhancing my glow even further! I use the **Rare Beauty Positive Light Liquid Luminizer in Flaunt or Captivate** as my face base, and the **Teviant Star Balm in Champagne** all over my body for a head-to-toe radiant look. These two products give me the ultimate sunkissed, luminous glow.



GABBI GARCIA

ACTRESS, HOST, FIVE BEAUTY CO-FOUNDER

As a morena, I've truly learned to embrace the skin I'm in. My go-to beauty staples? A radiant SPF and a lip and cheek tint that gives me a fresh, sunkissed glow. And when I want to elevate my look, I'll add a bit of bronzer. It's simple, effortless, and most importantly, it makes me feel like me—a proud, confident, and glowing authentic Filipina.

ISABELLE DAZA

MOM OF 3, ACTRESS, HOST, CONTENT CREATOR

I love using the **La Mer Moisturizing Soft Cream** for every day and whenever I travel. On hot, humid days, I also like the **La Mer Renewal Oil**. For my nighttime routine, I recently discovered that the **CeraVe Resurfacing Retinol Serum** is great to use in the evening!

CES DRILON

VETERAN BROADCAST JOURNALIST

I'm proud of my morena skin tone and I've never felt compelled to lighten it. Even if I love being under the sun, I still make sure to avoid potential sun damage. I use an SPF 30 sunscreen lotion on my legs and arms and an SPF 50 sunscreen on my face and neck. One very costly mistake I made during the pandemic was skipping sunscreen, which led to a melasma flare-up on my face. Now, I apply a serum twice a day on my brown spots.

Before going to bed, I lather lotion on my entire body to even out my skin tone, as prescribed by my go-to skin care specialists from Avignon Clinic. More than anything else, I believe what's most important is your inner confidence and glow, which you get from knowing that you are unique and worth celebrating.

PAM QUIÑONES

VOGUE PHILIPPINES FASHION DIRECTOR

In recent years, I've noticed my skin becoming drier, so I gravitate toward hydrating products that leave a glowing finish—I'll never get tired of a dewy look. The **Charlotte Tilbury Glow Toner** and **Hindy Weber Healing Face Oil** are my skin prep products. They keep my skin hydrated and moisturized. I also do Gua Sha with the oil when I remember, usually twice a week. To amplify my morena glow, I love using the **Chanel Baume Essentiel Multi-USe Glow Stick in Golden Light**. For coverage, I mix the **Shiseido Synchro Skin Self-Refreshing Foundation in Maple and Citrine** and use it as a light concealer. I add warmth to my face with the **Rare Beauty Warm Wishes Effortless Bronzing Stick**—it also works great for contour. Then I finish everything with **Rare Beauty's Always An Optimist 4-In-1 Mist** for an extra hit of hydration.

CHELSEA MANALO

MISS UNIVERSE PHILIPPINES 2024

Feeling confident in your skin can be quite a journey, and it often takes time and intentional effort. I make sure that I use hypoallergenic formulas, because I find them to be soothing and nourishing for the skin. I love that they're designed to be gentle, minimizing the risk of irritation, while hydrating and protecting my morena complexion. I also use body oils, like coconut or jojoba oil, to lock in moisture for a healthy glow. Remember, your skin deserves the same kind of tenderness you show to anyone you care about. Nurture it with patience and love.

DAZA, GARCIA, MANALO, PARAISO, QUIÑONES: COURTESY OF SUBJECTS. DRILON: JES AZNAR.

THE BEAUTY OF BROWN

In a country obsessed with fairness, these women stood their ground—and became icons while doing it. **BY LIA CRUZ**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY BJ PASCUAL

These pages: Makeup: Juan Sarte (Aquino, Isidro, Doesnt), Gery Penaso (Calzado, Dizon, Gonzalez), Jigs Mayuga (de Leon-Gonzalez). Renz Pangilinan (Aquino, Calzado, Doesnt), Paul Nebres (Dizon, Gonzalez, Isidro), Cats del Rosario (de Leon-Gonzalez). Fashion styling: Maica Tady of Qurator, assisted by Claire Fernando, Shark Tanael, and Bea Panganiban.

It seems the tides are shifting.

In previous decades, upon switching on a television in the Philippines, you'd find a bevy of fair-skinned, bright-eyed beauties smiling from the screen via the onslaught of noontime shows, teleseryes, sitcoms, and advertisements.

In recent years, however, as the way media is consumed has changed, the faces on screen have as well, this time smiling from smartphones and tablets and laptops. They are still bright-eyed. Some are still fair-skinned. But not all. Many, in fact, have skin in different shades of brown. Some are closer to ebony. Their hair varies in color and texture; their shapes and sizes are all different. One thing remains the same: They are all beautiful.

In the same way we can feel the wind shifting before a storm bears down, we can sense the change of direction in our culture as a whole. "Representation" and "inclusivity" are now buzzy words, thanks, in large part, to the younger generation. In a country which has never quite escaped the clutches of colonial mentality, the concept of beauty has not always been inclusive. Beautiful has mostly been equated with fair. But now, those who are not fair—the morenas—finally have a piece of the pie.

And that is what brings us here, on a Saturday afternoon, to a never-been-done-before photo shoot celebrating the morena. But the women gathered here are not your average morena. The women here are veterans of the modeling and showbiz industries, moving with such grace and authority, the kind that comes from seeing seasons change in the public sphere.

Their skin glistens in all shades of caramel, and as they preen expertly for the camera, they squeal as they catch up on each other's lives, gushing how honored they are to be part of this lineup. These women—Angel Aquino, Iza Calzado, Tweetie de Leon-Gonzalez, Mylene Dizon, Wilma Doesnt, Bianca Gonzalez, and Agot Isidro—have, through the years, stood as pillars of Pinay beauty, standouts in the sea of snowy white skin that was the previous definition of "maganda."

Each woman is here because she has always been proud of her morena skin, expressing nothing but love for it in public. They have been looked to as role models, sometimes beacons of hope, for the typical morena.

It hasn't been easy. While most of them share that their skin tone never really mattered growing up, a handful have stories to tell. Doesnt, whose skin is the darkest of the lot, was bullied and teased every step of the way—from childhood up until she started modeling and acting. Gonzalez, as well, says she was taunted "Maitim, maitim, maitim!" and "Negra, negra, negra!" in school. And Isidro shares that beside the rest of her mixed-race family, she was always the literal dark horse.

These women are also trailblazers. The modeling scene embraced de Leon-Gonzalez and Aquino's skin, turning them into the toast of the land. Dizon, Isidro, and Calzado were singled out as actresses who did not succumb to changing themselves just to fit into a certain stereotype.

To hear them compare the 90s and early 2000s to the current era is heartening. They have all noticed more diversity, more inclusivity, more representation. Beauty brands, local at that, have also begun catering more to morenas. Isidro says that people are kinder now, and more welcoming. De Leon-Gonzalez points out that we can learn so much from the younger generation, and says that the pressure to conform shouldn't even be a point of contention anymore—the world has changed so much that everyone is now accepted. Dizon, Doesnt, Gonzalez, Aquino, and Calzado all underscore the significance of representation for children, a matter personal to them, since they are all mothers.

We asked each of them to define "morena pride." Though they each had different answers, it ultimately boils down to one thing: loving the skin they are in. The tides have indeed shifted.

All hail the morena.

> "Their hair varies in color and texture; their shapes and sizes are all different. One thing remains the same: **They are all beautiful.**"

“Morena pride is being confident in your brown skin. And owning it. And celebrating it.”

ANGEL AQUINO

Angel Aquino is on a healing journey. Her legendary dusky skin tone is now dotted with patches of white—caused by vitiligo, an autoimmune condition wherein skin loses color. What started as one white spot on her hand during the pandemic multiplied. “The dermatologist said it was vitiligo,” she says. “There’s no cure for it.” It’s been difficult. “Last year, I had a very tumultuous relationship with myself,” she shares. To manage the stress often associated with autoimmune conditions, Aquino does yoga, meditates, and prays. Her peace has begun, with the sparkle back in her eyes and her brown skin glowing, white patches and all.

> “It’s confidence, and learning to love it. Embrace it, affirm it, and just enjoy it.”

AGOT ISIDRO

Agot Isidro has always felt different. She felt it growing up, with her fair-skinned siblings, and in showbiz in the 90s. Although she was never made to feel ugly next to all the mestizas, she just felt different, even briefly experimenting with glutathione. But Isidro, who is pushing 60, says aging changed things. “When you get older, you don’t think about what people say anymore. This is how I look. I like the person that I see,” she says. To other morenas, she says, “Embrace the skin you’re in. You hear it all the time, but that’s all I can say. You can change your look, but how you see yourself, that’s up to you.”

IZA CALZADO

Iza Calzado is someone who has been very open about her body struggles and insecurities. But when it comes to her skin color, her only issue with it is that she is utterly enthralled by it. Calzado has had a brand put white foundation on her skin, so she would look whiter in their TV commercials. She's had people tell her, "Do you ever think of how much more beautiful you'd be if you were whiter?" She, however, remains steadfast: "'Yun yung definition nila of what's beautiful. But ako, I love my skin color!"

> "When you say morena, it's about the Filipina skin tone. Morena pride is about being proud of your roots, the color of your skin."

“I’m not even thinking about shame or pride. Morena pride is not even thinking about it—it’s just being happy in your own skin.”

MYLENE DIZON

Mylene Dizon is excited about this shoot. “I’m so tired of hearing ‘You’ll look prettier if you’re whiter.’ Or ‘If you’re dark, you’re ugly.’ I hate that. And we should be careful kasi tumatatak sa mga bata ’yan,” she says. Dizon has always been called one of the few morenas in showbiz. Not that it matters. She’s always embraced her skin tone. “I travel a lot to surf. I see mga Pilipina from all over the country and, man, ang ganda natin. Ang ganda ganda ng kulay natin,” she says. “I want more people to be proud of the skin tone that we are born with.”

“A proud morena is someone who celebrates her brown skin, and doesn’t let anybody make her feel like she has to lighten or whiten.”

BIANCA GONZALEZ

Bianca Gonzalez’s two daughters, aged six and nine, have both inherited her morena skin. It’s clear that when she talks about representation and inclusivity, she does it with them in mind. Our obsession with fairness, she says, doesn’t make sense. “It’s so bizarre na majority of the country looks like this, and yet it’s looked down upon,” she says. “The more visible and vocal we are, the more it normalizes things for some young girl, somewhere, being bullied for being dark, so she doesn’t have to think na kailangan niyang magpaputi.”

“May nag-offer sa akin ng whitening deal. I said no. I don’t want my children to think na dahil morena, kailangan i-alter, na kung dark-skinned ka, hindi ka beautiful.”

WILMA DOESNT

Wilma Doesnt bursts with pride about her skin, and everything she’s had to endure because of it. She’s been bullied relentlessly, relegated to certain roles, told to whiten herself, and even told “Ang ganda mo sana, kaya lang ang itim mo.” (“You would have been beautiful, but you’re dark.”) Modeling changed her mindset. “Kapag hindi ko minahal sarili ko, sino mag-e-embrace sa akin? Nobody, kasi kahit ako, I don’t believe in my color eh!” The shift in culture brings her joy: “Sana ten years from now, wala nang mabubully na Pilipino.”

“Morena skin really, in all honesty, is something to be proud of. I love the glistening effect it evokes. It’s so unique, so distinctive, so alluring.”

TWEETIE
DE LEON-GONZALEZ

For all the acclaim her morena skin has gotten, Tweetie De Leon-Gonzalez has never thought too much about it. She has never let it stop her from living the active lifestyle she loves, nor has she ever let offhanded comments get to her. Instead, she is full of hope for the point we are at now in history, where people are more open to diversity. “We’ve developed so much,” she says. Whether it’s skin color, height, weight, I don’t think it’s a point of contention anymore. It’s really a free world we’re living in. We’re all on even ground.”

morena ACHIEVERS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ARTU NEPOMUCENO

These pages: Makeup: Eddie Mar Cabiltes (Dr. Bagamasbad, Tan, and Magbitang) and Don de Jesus (Atilano, Enriquez, Castillo, Escobar). Hair: George Aliben (Dr. Bagamasbad, Tan, and Magbitang), Cats Del Rosario (Atilano and Castillo), and Eddie Mar Cabiltes (Enriquez and Escobar). Fashion styling: Steven Coralde of Qurator, assisted by Jia Torrato, Charlotte Sombillo, Niña Cuyana, and Jermainne Lagura.

Breaking barriers while owning their shade—this is the morena today.

BY ANYA GRANADOS

In a world where lighter skin has long been upheld as the pinnacle of beauty, morenas are rewriting the script on success, and are doing so on their own terms. Dr. Pia Bagamasbad, Mitzi Jonelle Tan, Biena Magbitang, Jean Enriquez, Cherrie Atilano, Captain Brooke Castillo, and Martika Escobar are not just defying stereotypes instilled by our colonial past—they're shattering them.

Simply existing and celebrating morena skin is a profound act of honoring Filipino culture. It is an acknowledgment of our heritage, a rejection of colorism, and a celebration of the rich diversity that makes the Filipino identity. Far from allowing their identities to be defined by historical biases, these women have turned their experiences as morenas into catalysts for change, using them to challenge the barriers that once sought to hold them back.

Raised in environments where dark skin was often the subject of ridicule, these remarkable women have transformed that very criticism into a powerful force for change. Tan, a climate activist, rejects colonial beauty standards with fierce conviction, asserting that decolonization includes honoring Filipino features. Escobar, a filmmaker, creates pathways for fellow morenas to thrive in an industry once dominated by mestiza faces, while Dr. Bagamasbad, a scientist, leverages her morena confidence to challenge the prejudice she faced in academe.

Enriquez, an advocate against human trafficking, channels her morena identity into her advocacy for marginalized women and children. Reflecting deeply on her roots, she becomes emotional when asked about the best thing about being morena: "The best thing about being morena is telling the world that the Filipino race is here, that we should be visible, and we should not be seen as less important globally." This pride in her identity ties back to her profound connection to her heritage, particularly the struggles and triumphs of her parents and ancestors from the Tagalog region. "It brings me back to my roots," she muses. "To honor our ancestors, where we came from, and what they've gone through, and how they struggled and overcame obstacles along the way."

Magbitang, a journalist and one of very few in the country specializing in climate stories, connects her heritage to her work, raising awareness about the disproportionate impact of environmental issues on brown communities. Atilano defies the odds as a morena and leader in agriculture, using her identity to challenge both gender and classism in a male-dominated field. Her work in sustainable farming and advocacy for marginalized communities demonstrates the power of embracing heritage to create meaningful change, while Castillo, a pioneer for women in aviation, challenges colorism within her industry, paving the way for future generations of morenas in the skies.

Philippine history is replete with morena achievers, whose contributions have significantly shaped our nation's legacy, from Tandang Sora to Kumander Liwayway. In the 21st century, a new generation of morenas have more than enough heroes to look up to and identify with.

With the power that morenas hold, one can't help but wonder, *"Is the world afraid of morenas?"* Our ancestors once worshipped the legendary warrior Princess Urduja, and although proof of her existence never materialized, she lives on in the morenas of today. Together, these women prove that being morena is not a disadvantage, but a foundation for sustainable change, inspiring future generations to embrace their heritage, reject limiting narratives by simply existing in their own skin, and boldly carve their own unapologetic paths forward. Out of our colonial shadows, morenas are stepping into the sun.

morena *mind*

LIMITLESS POWER

Pia Bagamasbad, PhD

DIRECTOR AND PROFESSOR OF THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MOLECULAR BIOLOGY AND BIOTECHNOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES-DILIMAN; 2022 THE OUTSTANDING WOMEN IN THE NATION'S SERVICE (TOWNS)

Filipina scientist Dr. Pia Bagamasbad believes that a morena is more than just a woman defined by her skin color—she is a symbol of confidence, resilience, and hard work. For Dr. Bagamasbad, the essence of being a morena lies not in physical appearance but in the strength and leadership that women, regardless of their skin tone, bring to their fields. "We shouldn't be defined by our skin color," she asserts, emphasizing that the focus should be on celebrating women's power and leadership. She advocates for a shift in perspective, where the true measure of a morena is not her outward appearance, but rather her ability to rise, inspire, and make a meaningful impact in her field.

This is exemplified in how the scientist led the country's first government-accredited RT-PCR testing and training of laboratory personnel, which led to the further development and expansion of the country's testing capacity. This was done under her guidance as a leading scientist at the National Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology at the University of the Philippines. Most recently, she discovered the Krüppel-like factor 9 (KLF9), a gene responsible for stifling tumor growth. This joint discovery with her student Weand Ybañez has contributed to drawing the connection between the development of breast cancer and stress and sleeping habits.

Dr. Bagamasbad's journey in science has been shaped not only by her identity as a woman, but also as a morena. Trained abroad and with over a decade of experience in the life sciences, Dr. Bagamasbad encountered barriers that many women, especially Filipinas, often face in academia. In the U.S., she found herself a minority in a space that expected her to be quieter and more reserved. "There were some people that looked down on me," she reflects, acknowledging the prejudice that often comes with being both a Filipina and a woman in a leadership role. But Dr. Bagamasbad didn't let this deter her. Instead, she used it as fuel to prove what Filipinas are made of. "I just worked hard and showed them that Filipinas can be smart," she says, emphasizing that her accomplishments were a testament not only to her intellect, but also to her true grit as a Filipina. Her unwavering determination to break down these barriers has helped pave the way for other women in science to follow suit, proving that no matter the obstacles, Filipinas have what it takes to lead and succeed.

And for Dr. Bagamasbad, part of that success comes from embracing what makes her unique, especially her morena skin. "I think that we [morenas] look good no matter what it is that we do," she says confidently, acknowledging the beauty of being a morena in a culture that has often valued fair skin as the ideal. "Being morena is not very popular, especially among us Filipinos who think that being fair-skinned is the definition of beauty," she adds. But she doesn't let that dictate how she carries herself. For her, confidence is key. "As long as you exude confidence and you're good at what you do, it's easy to get the support of people." Bagamasbad's message is clear: stepping into your true power lies in self-assurance and competence, not in fitting into an external mold. And as a morena, there's nothing that you can't achieve.

"Her accomplishments are a testament not only to her intellect, but also to her true grit as a Filipina."

JOT LOSA DENIM AND LACE JACKET

"It's not about dominating the conversation, but about pushing doors open so others can follow—and, eventually, working towards a world where those doors no longer exist at all."

CARL JAN CRUZ DRESS. BURLÓ BY VESTIDO EARRINGS.

fighting *for* OUR FUTURE

Mitzi Joelle Tan

CLIMATE ACTIVIST AND CO-FOUNDER OF YOUTH ADVOCATES FOR CLIMATE ACTION PHILIPPINES

Mitzi Jonelle Tan was born in the eye of the storm. Unlike many of her contemporaries who were first introduced to the climate crisis through textbooks and classroom discussions, there was no gentle handshake that came as an introduction. Tan met the climate crisis when the storms were halfway through her front door. What she thought would be a childhood nightmare soon became a grim reality she would relive year after year.

The Metro Manila-based climate justice activist first began making waves of change in 2017 after an eye-opening integration with indigenous leaders. Today, she is the international spokesperson of Youth Advocates for Climate Action Philippines (Fridays for Future Philippines), and has represented the movement at the European Youth Event, various UN Climate Change Conferences, and at the Natural History Museum's Generation Hope in London.

For Tan, every fight is won with love, and love knows no boundaries. "I think my family brought me up thinking that the world is like this because the rules are written by a specific set of people. The people who have colonized us, the people who have abused us, the people who have taken advantage of the earth and our people," the 27-year-old activist shares. "But I've always been a rule breaker, even as a kid, and I was like, those are the rules and those are the people writing the rules and I don't want to follow them. I refuse to follow a certain box, a certain guideline, just because they said that that is how people should look."

Tan takes the fight to the frontlines, regardless of where it is—whether it's on the outskirts of Quezon City or in the parliaments of Europe where she brings policymakers to their knees. She is a morena who unapologetically takes up space, just as she should. But she's also acutely aware of the privilege that comes with it. As she reflects on her media coverage, especially in the West, she recognizes that it's because she speaks fluent English, is educated, has access to the internet, and can articulate herself in ways that many activists, especially those at the forefront of vulnerable communities, cannot.

For Tan, this acknowledgement of her own privilege is crucial in how she navigates her role. "It's something we all need to actively practice and pursue," she says, urging everyone in the field to recognize their privileges, use them to amplify other voices, and know when it's time to step back and make space for others. It's not about dominating the conversation, but about pushing doors open so others can follow—and, eventually, working towards a world where those doors no longer exist at all. As a Filipina, and as a morena, Tan knows there are still limits to what she can access and that we should all push for those boundaries to be dismantled. But once she's in the room, her job is clear: to open the door wide enough for others to come in, and, ultimately, to imagine a world where there are no barriers to begin with.

the climate *voice* WE NEED

Biena Magbitang

CLIMATE JOURNALIST AND DIRECTOR OF CLIMATE TRACKER ASIA

Biena Magbitang believes deeply in the power of stories, seeing them as a force that connects people across the world. "Great journalism," she explains, "is not just about reporting the truth. It's about making people care." For her, stories aren't just narratives—they shape our identity, impact our survival, and ignite hope for the future. As a climate journalist, Biena is committed to personally connecting people to issues that matter most by starting a dialogue with their hearts.

Magbitang's belief in the strength of her heritage is equally powerful. She tells *Allure Philippines,* "I believe morenas can achieve what they want to achieve." For her, being a morena isn't just about appearance—it's a superpower. "It means you have been through a lot of things, but you were able to stand above them all."

This deep connection to her roots is something she feels strongly about, and even more so when she travels abroad. "Whenever I go abroad for conferences, you can actually single out people through their colors," she shares, noting how her heritage is unmistakable, and it's something she takes great pride in. "It's my source of strength and power because I know I'm representing my country as a whole when I go outside. I don't have to explain who I am anymore, because if they see my color, they would basically think that I'm from this part of the world."

Over the course of more than a decade at ABS-CBN, she produced and managed *The World Tonight*, ANC's award-winning flagship newscast. Throughout the years, Magbitang also reported on and mentored journalists on writing energy transition stories, expanding coverage on COP26, COP27, and the 2022 G20 Summits. In 2017, she won a bronze medal at the New York Festivals Awards under Climate Change and Sustainability.

When Climate Tracker Asia first launched, its mission was clear—to bridge the gap between the masses and advancements in climate and environmental policy through impactful media coverage. Over the years, the platform has grown, playing a significant role in high-level climate negotiations, including the annual UN Climate Change Conferences.

Magbitang's ultimate dream, however, goes beyond merely participating. She envisions a future where climate negotiations are so effective that the world won't need to hold policymakers and leaders accountable for their inaction—the progress will simply be too tangible. It's a bold, ambitious vision, but one that speaks to her commitment to not just report on the climate crisis, but actively shape its resolution.

YOYA BUTTON-DOWN SHIRT. DONA LIM DENIM JEANS. BURLÔ BY VESTIDO EARRINGS.

“Great journalism is not just about reporting the truth. It’s about making people care.”

> “When you know you can contribute to something bigger, and you know that what you’re doing can be backed up by tangible work, people will always listen to you. There’s no gender in making change [happen].”

APARA STUDIO TOP. KILLJOY STUDIOS DENIM SKIRT. BURLÔ BY VESTIDO EARRINGS.

planting *seeds* OF CHANGE

Cherrie Atilano

FOUNDING FARMER, CEO, AND PRESIDENT OF AGREA AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL; UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL AMBASSADOR FOR THE SCALING UP NUTRITION MOVEMENT

Cherrie Atilano's story is one of defiance honed by the soil of the Philippines itself. The narrative of her life begins in the expanse of a sugarcane farm, where, as a child, she witnessed the deeply-ingrained inequities of the agricultural system. The harsh realities of farm labor became evident to her at a young age, as the seasonal sakada laborers worked under excruciating conditions, often exploited by a system that seemed indifferent to their suffering. By 15, Atilano had made a vow: to not consume sugar, linking it with the exploitation of her people.

After stumbling across a book that revealed how lower-income families spend the majority of their income on rice and the remainder on ulam, 12-year-old Atilano was struck by the inefficiencies of a food system that forced families to allocate most of their resources to the staples of their diet. This realization planted the seed for radical change: that households should supplement their store-bought meat ulam with other crops—practical, sustainable, and capable of feeding entire families.

In subsequent years, Atilano worked as a consultant under the Department of Agrarian Reform, putting together 241 cooperatives of smallholder farmers in the country. Now, with over 19 years of experience in sustainable food systems, the AGREA founder is advocating for a larger youth presence in agriculture and agri-technology.

Yet, for all the ideals that drove her, Atilano's path was not without its personal struggles. Growing up in a country that equates fairness with beauty, she struggled with her morena skin. "I was told I wasn't beautiful because I wasn't fair," she says, echoing a sentiment that many morenas share. Growing up, she was encouraged by many to try whitening products, but now she sees herself as "perfectly cooked," sharing how being morena boosted her confidence. "Globally, every time you're in the room, you make the room a little bit more balanced," she says. She believes being morena is an achievement in itself.

Atilano came to embrace her identity, seeing her skin not as something to hide but as something to be celebrated. "I feel like being morena boosted my confidence a lot," she notes. "Your color is unique: not a lot of people have that color, but a lot of people want it."

As a young woman in the male-dominated world of agriculture, Atilano's presence was often treated as a curiosity, an anomaly. Feeling tokenized when she was first starting out, Atilano shared that she was given a platform not only because she was a woman, but because she was young—something rarely seen in agriculture. But to her, it's less about being tokenized, and more about overcoming that feeling and what you make of that attention. "At the end of the day, when you know you can contribute to something bigger, and you know that what you're doing can be backed up by tangible work, people will always listen to you. There's no gender in making change [happen]. Food has no gender. Malnutrition has no gender. So when I approach it, I remember that this cause I'm advocating for has no gender. Don't be there as a woman—be there as a human being."

breaking *chains* FOR WOMEN

Jean Enriquez

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, COALITION AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN-ASIA PACIFIC; MEMBER OF THE CHAMPION WOMEN'S ADVISORY GROUP OF THE INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

Jo "Jean" Enriquez is not only a staunch advocate for women's rights, but also a proud defender of the Filipino identity. For Enriquez, simply existing as a morena is a powerful stand against racial and cultural erasure. "So many Filipinos are brown-skinned, and it's important to be proud of that," she says, emphasizing the need to embrace and uplift the Filipino race on a global scale.

However, life wasn't always so empowering for this morena, mainly in her youth when even her own siblings would single her out for being the "brown one" in the family. "When I was younger, it did affect me, but my schoolmates and my teachers had respect for me because when we express ourselves intelligently, it commands respect," Enriquez recalls. This, for her, was the key to overcoming insecurities about her skin color that others might project onto her. Rather than succumbing to comparisons based on appearance, Enriquez learned early on to value and celebrate her authenticity. "I never strove to change the way I look, especially the color of my skin," she affirms. And it's precisely this self-assurance, this unyielding commitment to staying true to herself, that continues to fuel her advocacy and her fight for justice.

Enriquez is unequivocal about the progress being made in the fight against trafficking, even as she remains realistic about the monumental challenges still ahead. Having represented the Philippines in numerous international spaces, she's seen firsthand how far-reaching the issue of trafficking is—affecting various sectors and involving a wide array of stakeholders. Enriquez points to the passage of the Philippines' Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003, an act she herself drafted, as a pivotal moment in setting a clear public standard that women and children are not commodities for sale. However, she insists that while legal frameworks have improved, there's still so much work to be done, particularly in shifting public perceptions and educating law enforcement on the true meaning of the law. "It means shifting the blame away from victim-survivors and towards those who are exploiting them," she asserts.

As the executive director of the Coalition Against Trafficking Women-Asia-Pacific, Enriquez is a staunch advocate for women's political participation and reproductive rights. Her work goes beyond women's issues in the Philippines, extending her expertise to South Asia, Bangladesh, and Cambodia. She continues fighting the good fight despite being threatened by abusers. In 2010, she received an award acknowledging her as one of The Outstanding Women in the Nation's Service (TOWNS).

Yet, the work Enriquez champions goes beyond legal reforms. Perhaps most critically, Enriquez advocates for survivor-led programs that place the voices of those directly affected at the heart of recovery and reintegration efforts. She takes note of the limitations of government programs that often offer short-term solutions without the long-term counseling and support survivors need. "A six-month casework would not suffice," she insists, stressing that the healing process for many survivors is far longer, given the trauma they experienced as children. For this morena, it's a call to action for more comprehensive, survivor-driven interventions that can be modeled and replicated across government programs to ensure real, lasting change.

SANDRO DELA PEÑA TOP. BURLÔ BY VESTIDO EARRINGS.

“For Enriquez, simply existing as a morena is a powerful stand against racial and cultural erasure.”

> “As a morena in aviation, Castillo proves that once you break glass ceilings, the sky’s the only limit.”

ANTONINA ASYMMETRIC TOP. MASSIMO DUTTI TROUSERS. BURLÒ BY VESTIDO EARRINGS.

a *legacy* IN FLIGHT

Brooke Castillo

THE FIRST FILIPINA COMMERCIAL JET CAPTAIN AND THE FIRST FILIPINA AIRBUS INSTRUCTOR

Captain Brooke Castillo is a trailblazer, soaring to new heights in a field historically dominated by men. As a morena in aviation, Castillo proves that once you break glass ceilings, the sky's the only limit.

For Castillo, being a morena has been an integral part of her identity and a symbol of how one can lead by example. "I think a morena is someone who can be herself, but also be an example to a lot of other morenas," she says.

Colorism, however, is a pervasive issue that Castillo has had to confront throughout her career. "I think [colorism] affects every industry where the common notion—and I say notion because it isn't the truth—is fair skin is the standard of beauty," she reflects. Even within her own family, Castillo has faced teasing about her skin tone. "My elders would tease me about it [being morena], but I always believed there was nothing wrong with my color," she adds. Despite these challenges, Castillo's unwavering self-belief has propelled her forward, reshaping perceptions in an industry that often feels inaccessible to women.

The barriers Castillo faced early on weren't just societal—they were institutional. "The first barrier is, of course, being a woman," she recalls. At the time, airlines were reluctant to hire female pilots, often citing concerns about the impact of pregnancy on flight schedules. "They tried to avoid hiring female pilots because if you got pregnant, they'd have to restructure the whole rostering system."

Castillo acknowledges that self-doubt can also hold women back, especially when faced with such systemic challenges. "I think a lot of the barriers are [also] our own. We doubt ourselves," she admits. But her story demonstrates that persistence pays off, even when the path has never been paved before.

Raised in a family that revered strong, accomplished women, Castillo's sense of determination was influenced by the trailblazers who came before her. Her grandmother, a college graduate in the early 1900s, was a beacon of hope at a time when higher education for women was nearly unheard of in the Philippines. "They were very surprised [to hear that I wanted to be a pilot], but they were very supportive," she shares, reflecting on the support system that fueled her ambition.

It was her family's support that primarily encouraged her to hone her love of flying, taking her dreams to even higher altitudes, as she became the first woman in the country to fly a commercial jet in 1996 with Philippine Airlines. In 2003, Castillo continued to pave the way for even more women, becoming the first woman in the Philippines to captain a jet with Cebu Pacific.

Inspired by generations of morenas before her, she broke barriers that once seemed insurmountable. Today, thanks to her trailblazing example, Filipina women are soaring to new heights in the skies.

the *lens* OF CHANGE

Martika Ramirez-Escobar

FILMMAKER-CINEMATOGRAPHER, *LEONOR WILL NEVER DIE*, AND GAWAD URIAN AWARDEE FOR BEST DIRECTOR

Martika Escobar seems immune to the ever-persistent grip of Filipino beauty standards, despite being surrounded by them as a mastermind behind a camera. Born in 1992, this millennial graduated with honors from the University of the Philippines, with *Pusong Bato*, the short film she completed for her thesis, competing at the 19th Busan International Film Festival. She eventually took home Best Film at Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival.

But, like most millennials, this filmmaker grew up in a world flooded with soap ads promising to make you "seven shades lighter," she could have easily bought into the idea that whiter is better. But instead, Escobar—fortified by her family's unwavering support—always knew that beauty wasn't something you could bottle or bleach away. In an industry where colorism still casts its long shadow, she's one of the few who refuses to let her worth be measured in shades. It's a quiet rebellion, but a rebellion nonetheless: She's not just breaking down barriers in film, she's rewriting the script of how beauty is defined on the silver screen.

"Being morena has not directly made an impact on me," Escobar says, noting the evolving beauty standards around her. "But I've noticed that with the way things are changing, we're being more open to different definitions of beauty. Actors nowadays aren't just mestiza." There's a sense of freedom in her words—a recognition that, while the industry has long favored one narrow idea of beauty, it's slowly moving towards more inclusivity.

For Escobar, this shift has allowed her to work without the typical pressures of colorism or conventional beauty standards. "I'm very lucky the industry has embraced me for who I am," she adds. "I've been able to make films creatively without that barrier of being judged by my color." For her, beauty is something that can be captured through a lens, but it's not about fitting a mold. It's about seeing the richness in all characters and personas, something Escobar, behind the camera, gets to do every day.

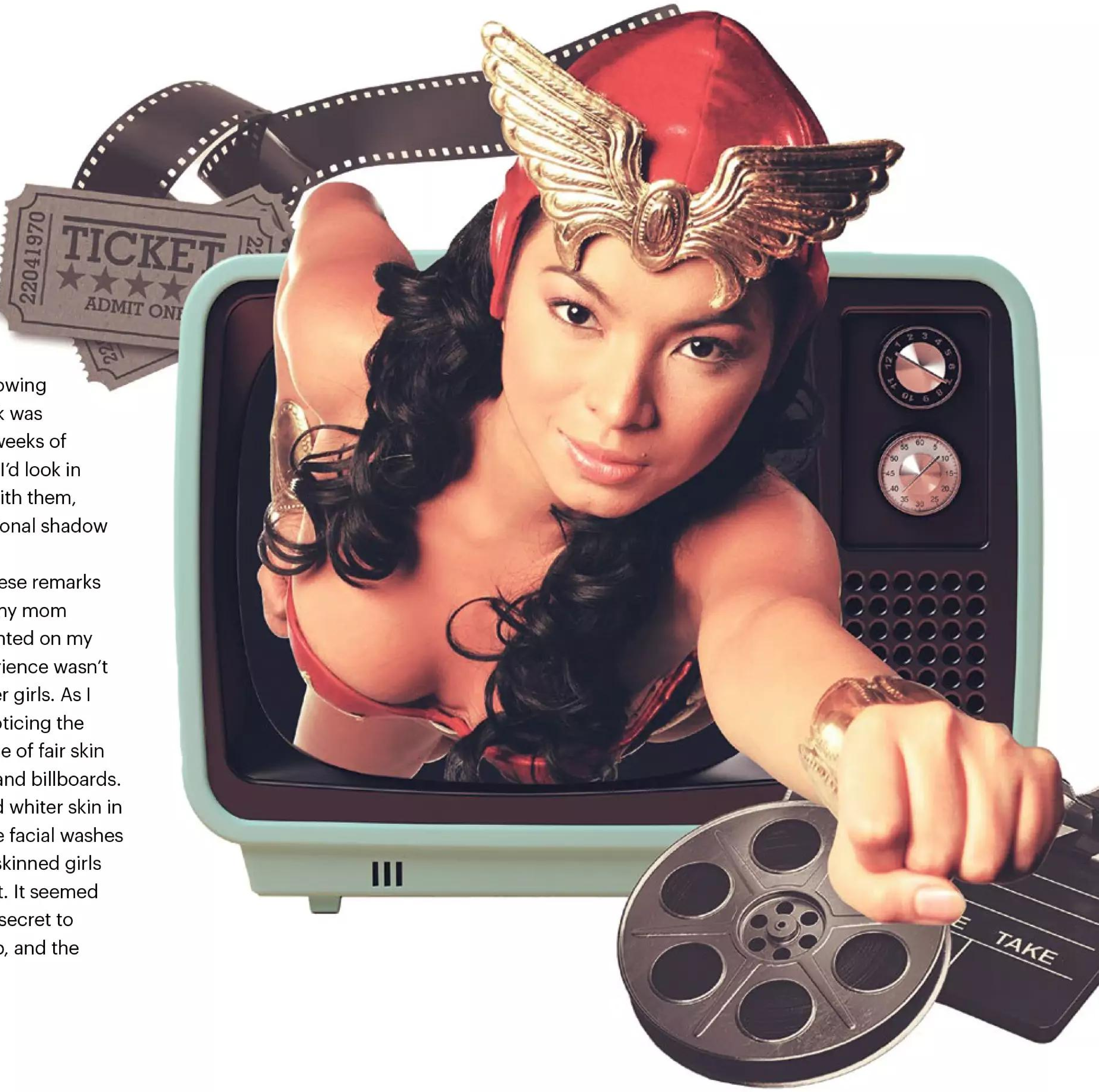
This mindset extends beyond the camera, too. When asked about the best beauty tip she's ever received, the *Leonor Will Never Die* (2022) director boils it down to something refreshingly simple. "I guess the best beauty tip is to just be yourself," the filmmaker says. "It's to appreciate who you are, how you look, and how you are. It's very basic—that beauty isn't just on the outside but also inside. What's important is to find beauty within and to reflect that to the world." It's a philosophy that mirrors her approach to filmmaking, where the value of a person, or a character, isn't confined to surface-level features. Instead, it's about recognizing and amplifying the richness of all experiences, no matter how they might defy traditional standards.

“She’s not just breaking down barriers in film, she’s rewriting the script of how beauty is defined on the silver screen.”

ORIAS STUDIOS VEST. ZARA TUBE TOP.

growing up MORENA, then and now

How media defined, and redefined, beauty standards for Filipinas **BY DONNA CUNA-PITA**



"Ay, ang itim mo!" I can still hear my well-meaning titas say this with furrowed brows whenever I would return from a beach trip as a kid. Growing up in the 80s, sunblock was optional, so after two weeks of playing under the sun, I'd look in the mirror and agree with them, seeing a three-dimensional shadow staring back at me.

While I didn't let these remarks get to me too much—my mom and lola rarely commented on my complexion—my experience wasn't the same as many other girls. As I grew older, I started noticing the overwhelming presence of fair skin in TV ads, magazines, and billboards. Beauty soaps promised whiter skin in just one week. Teenage facial washes featured glowing, fair-skinned girls winning the boy's heart. It seemed clear: fair skin was the secret to getting the guy, the job, and the life you wanted.

FAIR SKIN = BEAUTY AND SUCCESS?

"Fair skin was the gold standard of beauty," says Bryan Siy, an executive creative director who has worked on several beauty campaigns in his almost 25 years in the industry. "It was always linked to affluence—'kutis mayaman' and 'kutis artista'—implying that fair skin was synonymous with wealth and status." This wasn't just a passing trend; it was deeply rooted in colonial history and colorism. For centuries, the Western world shaped the idea that fairer skin was a sign of superiority.

"I remember my lola telling me that fair skin meant you came from a rich family," says Nicole Natanauan, a 19-year-old student. "I believed it because the main characters in the Disney movies I grew up with didn't look like me. They were fair and had features that didn't match my morena skin."

As a former fashion editor and stylist, I've seen how this bias played out in the industry. Local brands often turned to fair-skinned models, especially foreigners or those with mixed heritage, to create a more "aspirational" image. While there were morena stars in the local movie industry, they were often cast as the underdogs who managed to succeed in life despite their brown skin. If she were the star of the show, she would eventually get a makeover, which would inevitably include the whitening and smoothening of her skin so she could finally be beautiful and happy.

LOCSIN: THE MEGA ARCHIVES. COLLAGE: ANGELICA BACUNGAN.

THE DAWN OF THE DUSKY BEAUTY

Things began to shift when the internet became ubiquitous, and when the "woke" generation—the first to grow up with an online connection—started challenging the status quo. Social media questioned traditional beauty standards, sparking conversations about diversity and self-love. Brands that once promoted whitening products were rebranding their lotions and soaps as "brightening" to avoid backlash (although everyone knew they were still the same skin-lightening products).

The shift was cultural and ad campaigns reflected it. "Advertising is a reflection of cultural movements, but advertising can also create trends and pivot conversations," says Siy. When an ad campaign for a whitening skincare line featured a brown-skinned girl being envious of a fair-skinned one, with the tag line "Your fair advantage," it caused so much public uproar that political figures and government agencies rallied for it to be taken down.

The beauty industry was confronted with the then-radical idea that all skin tones were beautiful. And for the first time, morena girls had another option: Instead of trying to fit into someone else's definition of beauty, they could be proud of their natural brown skin.

Morena stars like Angel Locsin, Kathryn Bernardo, and Nadine Lustre were no longer relegated to playing the sidekick or the "ugly duckling"—they became the lead stars in movies and TV shows. Their faces were on billboards and in shampoo commercials, and their names alongside beauty products they endorsed. Locsin was even casted to play the country's most iconic heroine, Darna.

"When I was a young girl, up until high school, I wasn't considered beautiful and was never popular in school," shares Miriam Quiambao-Roberto, 1999 Miss Universe first runner and one of the few morena beauty queens at that time. "During college, I had a professor who encouraged me to join Binibining Pilipinas but I shrugged it aside... When I finally joined, I set myself to represent morena beauty to the whole world," she says.

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY

"I've personally felt this shift," says Natanauan. "I now get compliments for my morena skin—something that almost never happened before. It's empowering to see more people appreciate darker skin tones."

Today, movies, commercials, and ad campaigns feature a wider range of races, skin tones, and body types. "Our generation doesn't equate beauty to one specific skin tone," says my 18-year-old daughter Amara. "It's about celebrating diversity. Our definition of beauty is so much broader now."

Globalization and the rise of inclusive beauty brands have also played a huge role in this shift. Makeup lines now cater to a wider range of skin tones, offering everything from foundation to concealer shades that celebrate the beauty of different complexions. Yanee Vazquez, MD, a board-certified dermatologist and medical director of Aesthetic Science Clinic says, "More people now come to me asking for treatments that promote healthy, glowing skin rather than trying to lighten their complexion."

BEAUTY WITHOUT LABELS

For fashion and morena icon Tweetie de Leon-Gonzalez, this change represents a breakthrough in how we see beauty. "This generation is doing a great job celebrating all colors, shapes, and sizes," she says. "As parents, we should continue encouraging them to teach future generations the true meaning of beauty—one that's free from comparison and judgment."

Dr. Vazquez adds, "The focus on celebrating natural skin tones is helping to eliminate harmful labels like 'fair' or 'morena.' At the end of the day, beauty is not about rating skin tones. It's about confidence, grace, and authenticity."

This shift isn't just about morena skin becoming more accepted—it's about challenging the very concept of beauty standards altogether. We shouldn't feel the need to compare and rank skin tones. The real change? A world where beauty is simply beauty, in all its diverse, radiant forms. Ultimately, beauty shouldn't be something we strive to attain—it's something we should own.

> **"I now get compliments for my morena skin—something that almost never happened before."**

Raising a New Standard

From shame to strength—how four morenas learned to own their beauty and inspire the next generation.

BY ELAINE CARAG-CALDERON

COLLAGE: ANDREA QUINTOS

“MISS INSECURE!!!!!!!!!!!” the subject line read. I had just graduated from university when a bunch of made-up email addresses started flaming me in my inbox on and off for six months. “Hi girl na ‘di kaputian, insecure pa rin ba hanggang ngayon? Maitim. Ulikba. Hindi tinatablan ng whitening lotion!” were just some of my favorites from those messages.

First, they were anonymously sent using fake names. Eventually, they graduated to using familiar college friends’ names. I obviously knew this person, and they relished insulting me for my skin color, among other things. I figured this because the emails weren’t exactly about me being morena, but my complexion *always* came up in all of them.

I was already 21 and, perhaps mistakenly, thought that Filipinos had come a long way regarding these age-old beauty standards. Of course, the emails made me wonder: Are we still insulting women for the brown of their skin?

GROWING UP BROWN

Truthfully speaking, I’ve never been ashamed to be on the darker spectrum of whitening product commercials. I knew I didn’t fit Filipinos’ typical standards of beauty, but my insecurities weren’t rooted in my complexion. Despite being a tiny, brown-skinned girl who shied away from attention, I’m actually one of the lucky ones who’ve never been spoken to by family members or relatives that being morena wasn’t beautiful. The emails, though, were proof that some of my peers had *a lot* to say.

Merphi Panaguiton, a creative director and co-founder of self-shoot photo studio ATOMM Studios, had similar encounters with strangers and acquaintances. “To be honest, it was just a few years ago when I realized that skin color actually mattered in society,” she shares. “When I lived in Spain, I remember dating European men, and a fellow Filipina told me, ‘Ahh, kaya ka type n’yan kasi morena ka.” (“He likes you, because you’re morena.”)

It was the same for Ella Fortun-Zulueta, an international luxury brand manager and mother to a newborn daughter, whose experiences with colorism weren’t with family. “I was a serious ballet dancer growing up. Whenever we’d have dance recitals in the summer, I’d always be the tannest one because I’d also be enrolled in swimming classes,” she recalls. “I remember my ballet teacher commenting on how dark I was and people laughing about it, so that definitely embarrassed me.”

For Katrina Tomo, it was the opposite. She recalls her mother taking measures to lighten her complexion to avoid judgment from others. She exfoliated her skin, and eventually damaged it, in the hopes that all the scrubbing would lead to a fairer color. "The bane of my mother's existence is dark spots—on the knees, elbows, nape, singit—and she equates it to one's cleanliness until now," she adds. After graduating with her Master's in developmental psychology from the Ateneo de Manila University, training in special education, getting her license to teach elementary school, and becoming a mother herself, Katrina feels strongly about consciously breaking the beliefs our generation was raised with.

RECLAIMING SELF-WORTH

Our immediate circles may have shaped our personal beauty standards differently, but it's the extended communities we grew up in and the popular Filipino culture consumed in media and social media that ultimately shape the beauty standards we have to live with.

"Growing up, the makeup I was taught to wear was always light—pale foundation, pink cheeks, and red lips. Makeup wasn't as diverse, so everyone was taught that the colors are universal and 'should look the same' on everyone," Fortun-Zulueta recalls.

Tomo had a more unfortunate encounter when one of her undergraduate professors declared that the morenas in their class should consider lightening their skin because "students respond better to fairer teachers" and they "needed to stand out from their 'yayas from the province' and 'people on the streets' who aren't always seen as authority figures."

"These [perceptions] go beyond familial boundaries. This is cultural," Tomo states.

When you're made to think and feel like this, that your darker skin puts you on a certain rung in a ladder—worse, that you don't merit the same respect as others who are of fairer complexions—this perpetuates a vicious cycle long-passed on from generations before us. Whether consciously or subconsciously, there always seems to be the need to prove your worth more than others if you're not of a lighter color.

For Fortun-Zulueta, Tomo, and Panaguiton, their exposure to other cultures played a considerable role in their journey to fully embrace being morena. "When I lived abroad, I realized that people around me appreciated different skin colors," Panaguiton shares. "It was when I lived in Paris in my early 20s that I got the most compliments on my color," Fortun-Zulueta adds.

Ironically, working in media and publishing empowered me to take pride in being morena. As a consumer, I was often exposed to the mestiza and chinita models popular in magazines and TV commercials. Similar to living and traveling abroad, meeting so many beautiful people while at work—even just locally—made me realize how I just needed to widen my lenses to see every kind of beauty.

> "As we raise the next generation of morenas, there's a conscious effort to reinforce that brown is beautiful. "

LEAVING A LEGACY FOR MORENAS

As we raise the next generation of morenas, for us four, there's a conscious effort to reinforce that brown is beautiful—just as any other skin color.

Coming from her experience with friends abroad, Fortun-Zulueta recognizes the power of words, saying, "When people use 'dark' or 'fair' as an insult, children learn to associate those words with negativity. So using these words in positive speech will help shape a child's confidence in their morena beauty."

Tomo cites a 2018 study about colorism where it was reported that prejudice and discrimination based on skin color have become a global health concern, jeopardizing the physical health and mental well-being of adolescents. "They're more susceptible to insecurities related to appearance and self-worth, because adolescence is a vulnerable stage in human development," she says.

Panaguiton—as a young woman with a budding platform herself—then emphasizes positive affirmation to inspire confidence in morenas who are insecure about their complexion. "I believe in subconscious programming and re-programming, so language definitely plays a big role in instilling confidence in children."

It's refreshing to know that all four of us share a certain pride in being morena, and how we contribute to one conversation differently. It gives me joy that even though we've all been made to feel less on one occasion or another just because we weren't fair-skinned, we've come to accept that we're not just our complexion—and this is the sentiment we wish to contribute to the next generation of beautiful, brown-skinned Filipino girls.

Even if we were all raised in a time when morenas were once shamed and bullied, I'd like to think we're moving in the right direction toward acceptance—not just tolerance. "We're so fortunate that the beauty standards today are changing," Fortun-Zulueta says. "We see more women of all ethnicities, races, skin colors, and skin types," and it's another step to healing the negative effects of colorism.

As an educator and a mother, Tomo doesn't plan on focusing on her son's skin color to boost his confidence. "Rather, I want to shape his confidence based on his character," she says. "The parents' role in forming a healthy self-concept is undoubtedly important. Self-awareness as parents is crucial in cutting off negative beliefs." She also emphasizes exposing children to diversity early on so that they imbibe a broader perspective on beauty. "[Children] need to see variations of beauty standards. They also need to understand that those who come before them come from a time when colonial mentality affected standards, and they must be approached with understanding and compassion, but within a safe boundary of self."

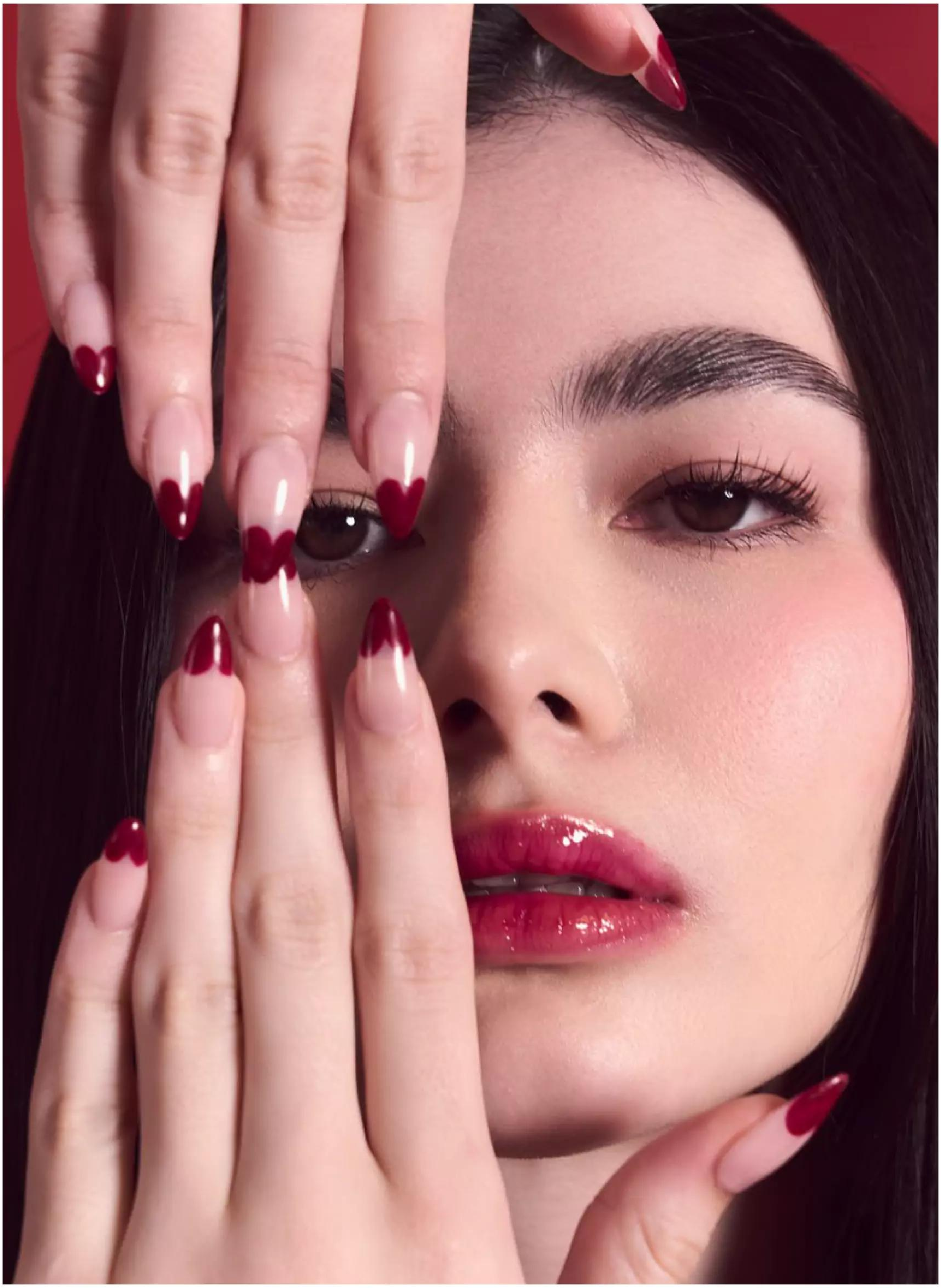
Setting these boundaries with family, friends, and community is crucial. Since children cannot defend themselves, parents need to draw those lines while they're young. "When negative comments are made on [my son's] color, my husband and I always respond with 'What a weird thing to say out loud to a baby,'" Tomo says. She adds that role-playing between parent and child can help children respond to situations that need boundaries. Prompts such as "What do you do when you're criticized for being morena?", "How do you respond?", or "What do you think when you see someone darker than you?" aren't meant to have fixed answers—but serve as conversation starters for parents to guide their children toward self-awareness, empathy, and setting healthy boundaries in real-life scenarios.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 186

TURNING HEADS

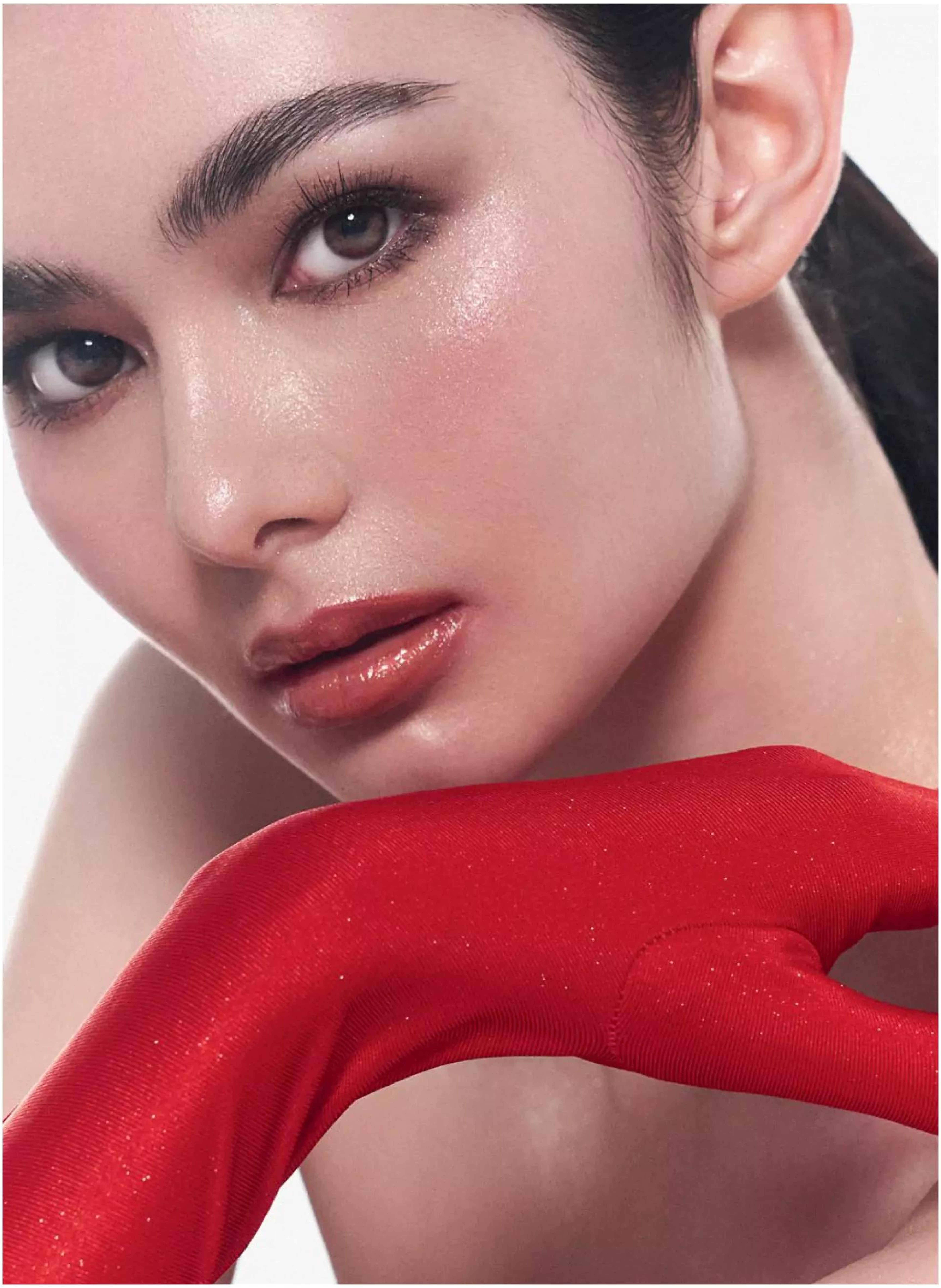
Timeless glam gets a twist from modern updates.

BY LARISSA JOSON. PHOTOGRAPHED BY JHARWIN CASTAÑEDA. MAKEUP BY ANGELINE DELA CRUZ. HAIR BY MURIEL VEGA PEREZ, ASSISTED BY IZA TANDO. MODELED BY LUISA JOCSON OF PMAP. NAILS BY SHIELA OMANG OF NEW LOUNGE.



THIS PAGE: TIP OFF Champagne in hand, make your nails a conversation starter. A French manicure goes from usual to unexpected with a punchy red, heart-shaped tip. **OPPOSITE: A PEARL OF WISDOM** Accessorizing extends to makeup, too. Safely add jewelry like pearls onto skin by using "makeup adhesives like lash glue," advises makeup artist Angeline Dela Cruz.

THIS PAGE: PAINT THE TOWN “Red lipstick is a staple—anyone can carry it,” says Dela Cruz. She used **Le Rouge Celine Satin Lipstick 01** as a base, topping it off with **Estée Lauder Pure Color Matte Lipstick 699. OPPOSITE: SHAPE SHIFTER** Hair becomes even more striking with one standout detail—think a sculpted bang. Hairstylist Muriel Vega Perez blow-dried hair before using a strong gel like the **Got2b Ultra Glued Indestructible Styling Gel.**



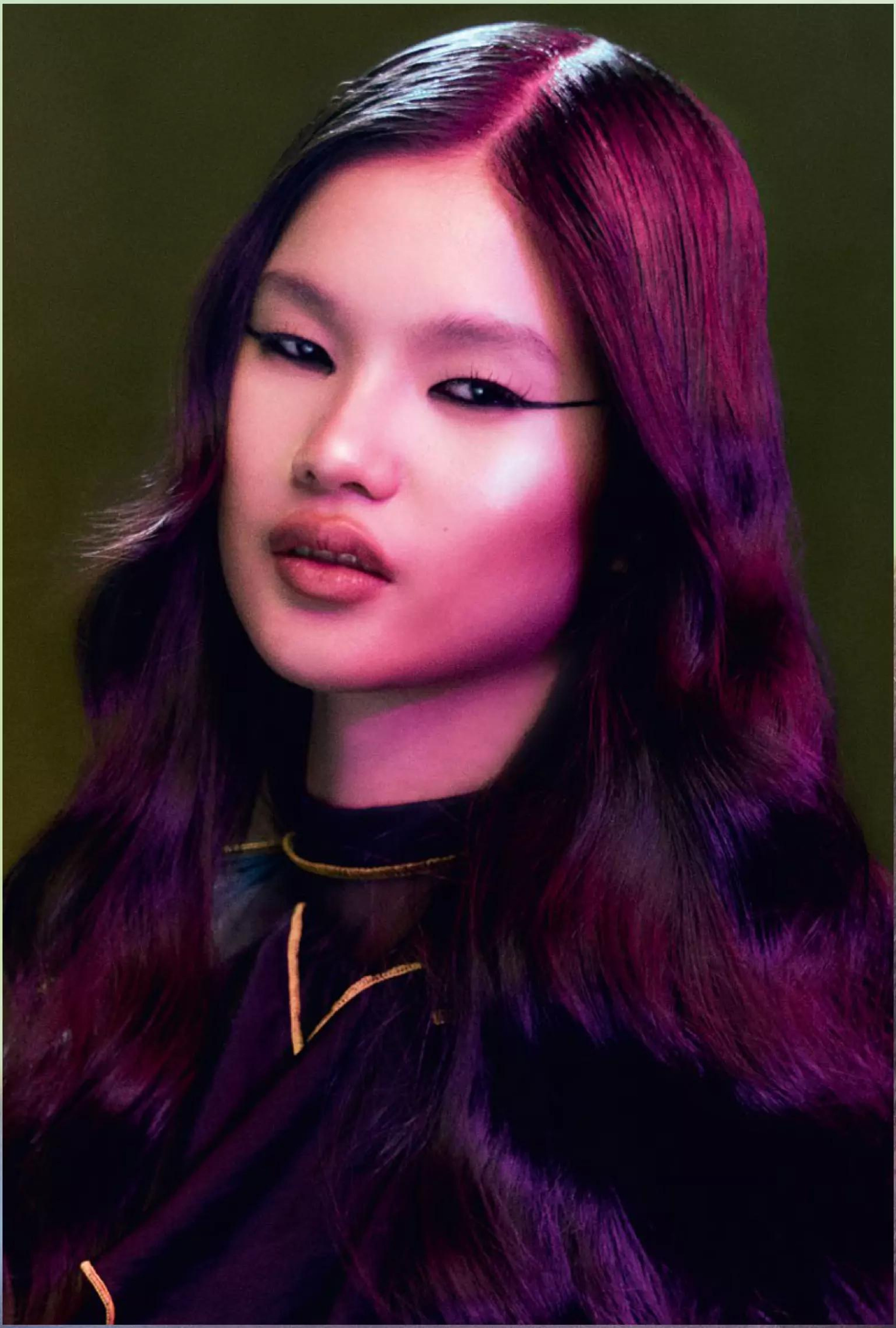
THIS PAGE: ALL THAT GLITTERS "For a more elegant look, the finer the glitters, the better," says Dela Cruz. Dust **Fenty Diamond Bomb All-Over Diamond Veil** over your eyelids and the high points of your cheeks **OPPOSITE: FREE REIN** Perfection and symmetry takes a step back with freehand liner—a fresh, but still dramatic take on graphic liner. "Use a really thin liner brush for the cleanest form," says Dela Cruz. "Then think of it like sketching. Draw where your hand takes you."

TEARS, BUT MAKE THEM METALLIC. Makeup artist Celine Cabildo's take on emotional beauty pairs a dewy complexion with silver-streaked "crying eyes." Her secret? A custom blend of metallic eyeshadow and clear lip gloss in a thick consistency.

PAINTED *feelings*

From quiet melancholy to euphoric bursts of color, makeup is more than self-expression—it's emotional storytelling. Here, the most captivating beauty looks that wear feelings on the skin. **BY ANDREA ANG**

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ANDREA GENOTA. MAKEUP BY CELINE CABILDO AND ZEE GHIELMETTI. HAIR BY MONG AMADO AND GLENDA EUGENIO OF TONI & GUY PHILIPPINES. FASHION STYLING BY STEVEN CORALDE OF QURATOR STUDIO. MODELED BY ASHANTI OF THE AUDACITY AND MIKA REINS OF PMAP. NAILS BY ANALYN SARTOCAS OF I DO NAILS.



TOQA DRESS AND TOP

PURPLE HIGHLIGHTER CAPTURES A MOOD—DREAMY, DELICATE, OR DARING. A pro tip from makeup artist Zee Ghielmetti: "Use it as a blush topper for extra dimension. If you're skipping blush, blend it closer to the undereye for a seamless lift."

FORGET THE OBVIOUS OVERLINED LIP. Ghielmetti introduces a subtler, more sculptural take: “Use a cream contour to create a shadow around the lip. It’ll enhance shape without needing you to drag the lip liner too high from the lip.”

STUDIO EUSTACIA TOP

NO NEED TO FEEL BLUE—JUST WEAR IT. Unlike the 90s take, where colored lashes stood alone on bare lids, Cabildo layers a complementary shimmer underneath, letting the hues melt together.

STUDIO EUSTACIA TOP AND RABANNE TOP (WORN INSIDE).

MSGM BLAZER (MIKA). COS BLAZER (ASHANTI).

ONE LOOK, TWO WAYS TO WEAR THE GLOW.
Cabildo favors translucent, duo-chrome pigments that catch the light while letting skin peek through—best applied with a fluffy powder brush for an airy finish. Ghielmetti layers powder metallics over cream formulas for a hyper-reflective sheen, packing it on using the fingers for max impact.

WRITTEN IN THE STARS—OR PAINTED ON WITH FEELING.
To create a star that shines in all the right places, Cabildo suggests mapping it along "the natural contours of your face, like the inner corners of your eyes that connect to your nose. Pack on glitter in the center and diffuse from that point."

STUDIO EUSTACIA TOP AND SHUSHU TONG DRESS (MIKA); STUDIO EUSTACIA TOP (ASHANTI).

BEAUTY *around the world*

Wherever Filipinas go, they always discover the best in beauty. Here's a curated list of beauty gems that powerhouse Pinays swear by—your ultimate guide to must-have finds across the globe. **BY BIANCA GOZON**

BOGOTA, COLOMBIA

"**Joaquina Botanica** champions Colombia's botanical treasures, blending them with science for effective, natural skin care. I've been using their **Orquídea + Vitamin C Hydrating Glow Oil** for four years! This lightweight and fast-absorbing oil is crafted with orchid extract and antioxidant-rich vitamin C, and it brightens, hydrates, and leaves my skin with a radiant glow."

KODAK PORTRA 400
43
KODAK PORTRA 400

ISABELLA PROLLAMANTE

Isabella co-founded GIGIL Philippines and is the co-owner of Lombia, a fair-trade company partnering with over 150 indigenous female artisans in La Guajira, Colombia, to create vibrant handcrafted bags using traditional crochet techniques.

DUBAI, UAE

"I highly recommend **Moroccan baths**. I feel like a brand new person after a steam and scrub session."

KODAK GPX
47

DANABELLE GUTIERREZ

Danabelle is a multi-talented writer, actress, and photographer. She was named Best Writer at Rooftop Rhythms in Abu Dhabi, honored as a Film Ambassador by the Film Development Council of the Philippines, and awarded Best Actress for the film *Aurora* at the 48-Hour Film Project.

BILLUND, DENMARK

"Showerlabs, a Danish brand offering the **MILO Showerhead and filter**, removes chemicals and impurities from hard water for healthier hair and skin while also providing clean drinking water to families in South America and Africa as [part of] their social responsibility. By the third day of using it, I noticed a visible difference—my hair shedding dropped from 10 to 20 strands to fewer than five after rinsing."

FUJI NPH400
NPH400

KOKO KO

Koko is a brand governance specialist with The LEGO Group. She works with licensing partners who produce LEGO merchandise, safeguarding the LEGO brand.

KAWAGUCHI, SAITAMA, JAPAN

"**Chacott** is a brand that specializes in ballet goods, from practice wear to pointe shoes, but they also make cosmetics beloved by ballerinas. Their **Finishing Powder** keeps my makeup in place, even through pro wrestling matches."

47
KODAK GPX
GPX
6

YAPI SANTIAGO

Known in the wrestling ring as "Yappy," she is currently the only Manila-born Filipina professional wrestler working full-time in the professional Japanese wrestling industry.

NEW YORK, USA

"I don't do any special treatments except a **facial, peel, or microdermabrasion at Christine Chin in the Lower East Side** every six months (or at least I try!). They're incredibly thorough—unlike many light-handed facialists, they really get down and dirty with extractions and a multi-step process that delivers results. I also use the **DRMTLGY Microdermabrasion Scrub** twice a week, usually before a mask. It's great for scrubbing out dead skin cells, and it leaves my skin feeling really clean."

47
KODAK GPX
GPX
6

GINA MOK-REYES

Gina, who previously worked as a director of knitwear at Rag&Bone and Alexander Wang, is currently the Supreme senior director for development and production. She works closely with design leadership and other cross-functional teams to execute the vision of the Supreme founder and expectations for the season.

PARIS, FRANCE

"I love **ORYZA Lab**, a skin care line made from rice. My favorite is their **Beauty Oil**, because it's rich without feeling heavy on the skin."

47
KODAK GPX
GPX
6

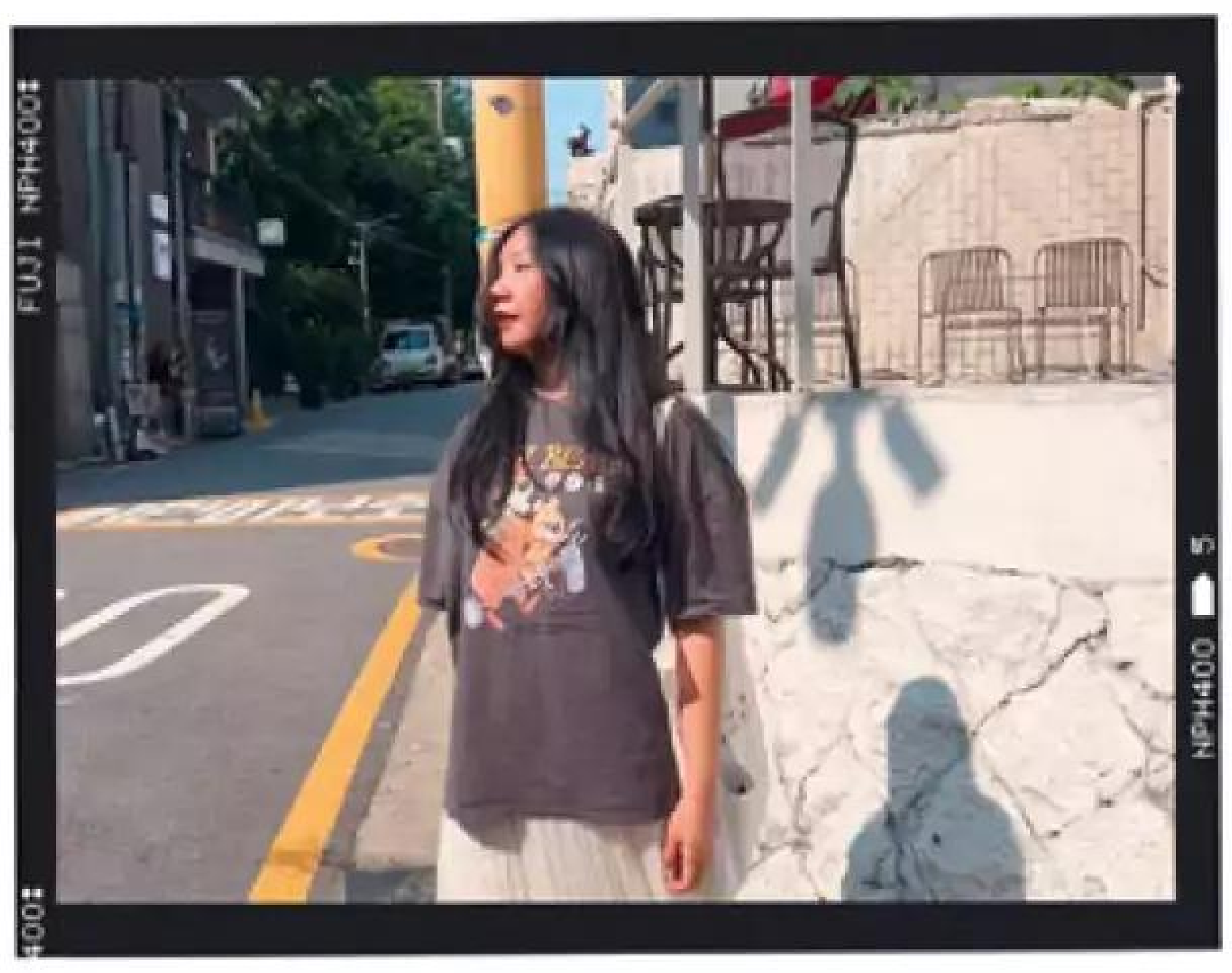
CHARINA SARTE

Charina is a fashion designer who ethically crafts effortlessly chic resort wear. Behind her eponymous brand's signature look of bold prints and fluid silhouettes is an all-women team of skilled seamstresses in the Philippines.

COURTESY OF SUBJECTS

SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

"The **Anua Rice Enzyme Brightening Cleansing Powder** turns into a mochi-like texture with water, leaving skin smooth and moist after washing. It's definitely a unique and fun addition to your routine if you want to make it a bit more interesting."



YZZA HABLADO

With a background in fashion and publishing, Yzza came to Korea to pursue creative endeavors and earned her Master's in visual design at Hongik University through a government-funded scholarship. Now, as a perpetually curious creative, she's involved in a wide range of projects across digital design, marketing, entertainment, and AI as a freelance artist.

MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

"**Mecca Cosmetica** is a top Melbourne beauty destination, and their **To Save Face SPF 50+ Superscreen** is a standout product in the Australian beauty scene. This lightweight, non-greasy sunscreen offers broad-spectrum protection, hydrates the skin, and is infused with powerful antioxidants, making it an essential product for anyone seeking both skin care and sun protection in one step."

PAULINE DE LEON

Pauline started off her career as an editor at Hypebae/HYPEBEAST, where she spent three years diving into fashion, beauty, music, and entertainment. Now a freelance creative, her dynamic storytelling through words, photography, and videography has graced top publications like *Broadsheet Melbourne, Time Out Melbourne*, and *Complex AU*.

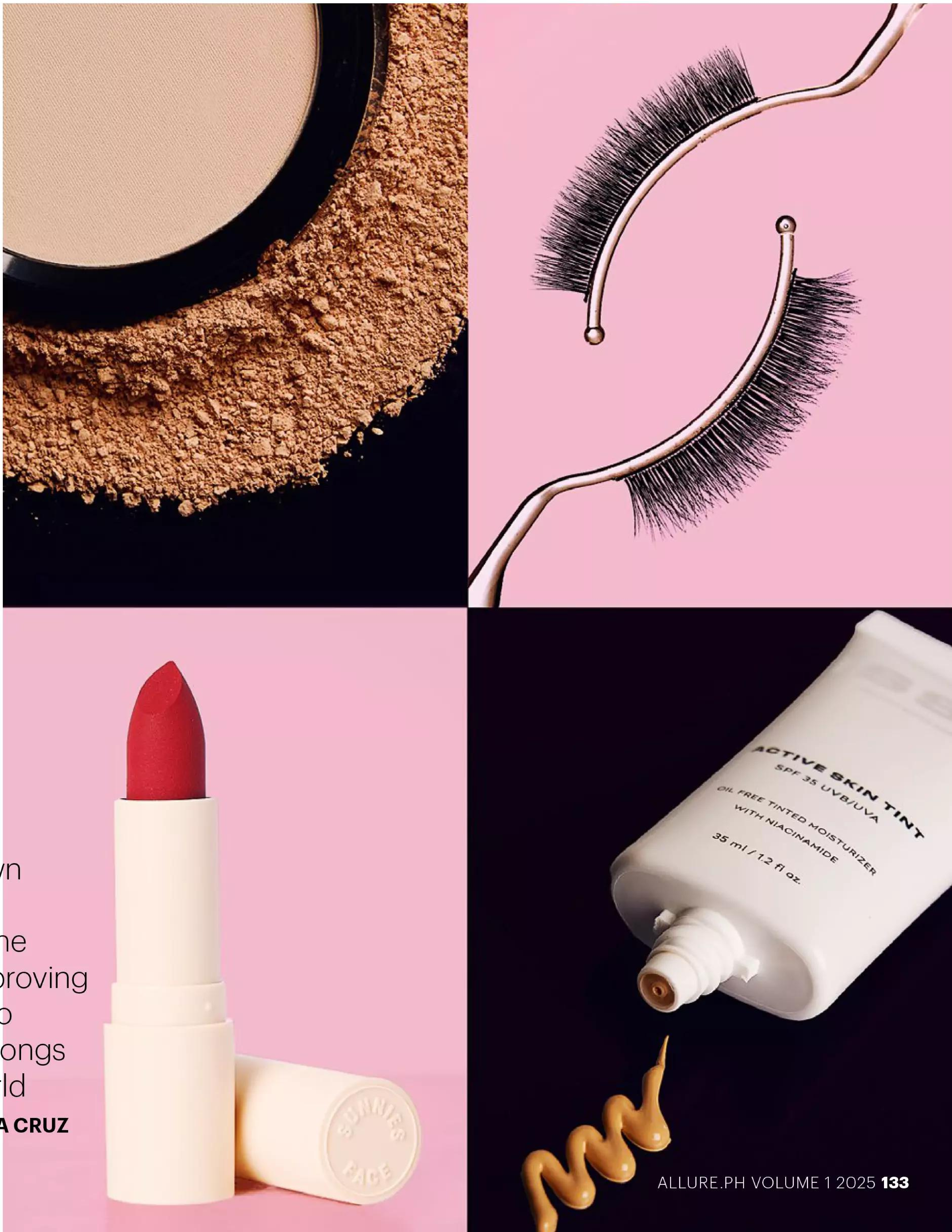
LONDON, UK

"A girl who once worked with a Soho House spa brand left to create her own natural and organic bath and body range for her husband's boutique pubs—and now stocked in nearly a hundred hotels across the U.K. She's become a friend, and when they expanded into beauty, she made me try the **Bramley Raspberry Seed Illuminating Face Oil**. Since then, I've been obsessed with both the scent and feel of it."

AISSA GONZALEZ

Aissa is the creative director of Naturalmat—a British company that handcrafts all-natural, organic mattresses, beds, and home accessories for residences, hotels, and superyachts around the world.

the future of
Filipino Beauty


ACTIVE SKIN TINT
SPF 35 UVB/UVA
OIL FREE TINTED MOISTURIZER
WITH NIACINAMIDE
35 ml / 1.2 fl oz.
SUNNIES FACE

These four homegrown brands are rewriting the rules and proving that Filipino beauty belongs on the world stage. **BY LIA CRUZ**

PRODUCTS: **KIERAN PUNAY**

“There’s so much history in this company. We try to respect that as we bring it into the future.”

The Pioneer: **Ever Bilena**

FOUR DECADES OF BEAUTY LEADERSHIP—AND STILL SHAPING THE INDUSTRY.

If there’s one beauty brand that practically every Filipino has heard of, from the highs of our mountaintops, down to the shores of our islands, regardless of social class, income bracket or even gender, it’s Ever Bilena. The brand has been around for 42 years, and continues to lord it over the market.

In 1983, Dioceldo Sy founded the company, selling nail polish in Divisoria to make ends meet after being unable to finish school. As business grew, he steered the ship into the juggernaut it is today, with around 2,000 employees, and products available in department stores, drugstores, groceries, convenience stores, kiosks, online, and through direct selling.

Sy’s daughter, Denice, born 10 years after he started the brand, is now chief sales and marketing officer. She joined the company in 2014, after finishing her studies in the U.S. “My dad asked me to come back. He wasn’t sure if he could keep up with the trends, and wanted someone he could trust. He said, ‘I spent so much on your tuition. Can you come back and ROI me?’” she laughs.

Denice is on a mission to keep the brand relevant, while still respecting its legacy. “According to the 2024 figures of Euromonitor International, we are the number one local beauty brand in the country. The biggest challenge is to keep transforming every time with the preferences of the current market,” she says. Her father would study the makeup looks of celebrities on TV. Denice, on the other hand, looks to TikTok. It was her who pushed for social media and digital marketing. She staffs her marketing team with Gen Z, and steers their sustainability efforts. She has introduced new products and lines, while still paying homage to what she calls the “OG products.” To demonstrate, their eye pencils and face powder, which younger customers sent trending on TikTok, retain the same best-selling formulas they’ve always had, albeit updated for skin benefits and packaging.

The industry is more competitive now than it was in 1983, but Denice welcomes that. “It keeps us grounded and reminds us to never be complacent,” she shares. “We also respect the industry even more, because we see how much work everyone is pouring in to make Filipino beauty an exciting place.” It’s of utmost importance however, that Ever Bilena remains a leader, as it has been all these decades. “There’s so much history in this company,” she says. “We try to respect that as we bring it into the future.”

PHOTO: **EXCEL PANLAQUE**

The Gamechanger: **Sunnies Face**

FROM A LOCAL CULT FAVORITE TO A GLOBAL PHENOMENON.

PHOTO: **KIERAN PUNAY**

In 2022, Sunnies Face co-founder and brand director Jessica Wilson opened an email and felt her heart drop. Leaping out from her screen were words from *Allure US*, informing her that Fluffmatte, their first-ever product, had just won the 2022 *Allure* Best of Beauty Award for Best Matte Lipstick—an accolade coveted by beauty brands worldwide.

"We were screaming so loud!" co-founder and creative director Martine Ho exclaims about that moment. It marked the first time any Filipino brand had bagged a Best of Beauty award. All five co-founders—Ho, sisters Jessica and Georgina Wilson, and husband-and-wife team Eric Dee and Bea Soriano-Dee—were elated.

"We would do a lot of our shoots in the U.S.," Ho explains. "The makeup artists we'd work with, we'd give them Fluffmatte, and they'd use them on their celebrity clients." Big Hollywood names who have worn or used Fluffmatte include makeup artists Pati Dubroff, Katie Jane Hughes, Hung Vanngo, and celebrities Madonna, Christina Aguilera, Emma Roberts, Kate Bosworth, Lucy Hale, Elsa Hosk, and Rosie Huntington-Whiteley, who even reached out to the brand for a collaboration. The interest abroad grew from there, and *Allure US* even ran a feature on the lipstick—titled *I Finally Understand Why Everyone Is Obsessed With This Filipina-Owned Lipstick*—prior to it winning an award.

> "They said we were being too meticulous. Even that we wanted keep the prices down, they said we were crazy."

With all the high-performing matte lipsticks out there, what is so special about Fluffmatte that it draws all these raves? "It just feels good," Georgina answers instantly.

Many would agree. Finding that magic formula meant months of hard work and tenacity. The Sunnies team, from the start, knew exactly what kind of lipstick they wanted. Throughout the process, they were told by suppliers that they were being too meticulous, "crazy" even for pushing for certain price points and packaging. The range of shades—nine when they launched, 24 today—went through extensive testing. The colors had to be universally flattering, particularly for Filipino skin tones.

For a company that began out of a clothing line started by Soriano-Dee, that then shifted to eyewear and produced campaigns with makeup looks so striking that they branched out to beauty, it's impressive how far they've come. Sunnies Face has evolved into a buzzy brand that sells in the U.S. and China, and ships globally. They've expanded their repertoire into products for cheeks, eyes, brows, and face, and have ventured into tools and skin care as well. It's a well-curated universe of Filipino beauty that they've built, and perhaps their biggest edge is that they know exactly how to make consumers want to be part of it. Dee offers a simple answer for their success: "We understand exactly what the market is looking for."

The Trailblazer: **New Lounge**

ELEVATING FILIPINO BEAUTY—AND ITS PEOPLE—ON THE WORLD STAGE.

> “The work ethic of Filipinos is different. Filipinos stand out in hospitality-related fields.”

Community means a lot to Rachelle Bravo, founder and CEO of lash and nail hotspot New Lounge, which first opened its doors in 2017. When she was younger, she found purpose serving in church and doing community work, as well as on medical missions with her Air Force reservist mother. Community is, in fact, the reason that she turned a passion project borne out of, in her words, “kakikay-an” into a full-fledged business.

Like many businesses, New Lounge started small. They create their own lashes using anti-bacterial sable, a premium material that allows for thinner and more natural-looking extensions. In the early years, Bravo did everything herself. “Marketing, social media, manager, receptionist, customer service, hiring—lahat!”

From its humble beginnings, New Lounge grew with a vision: to make beauty both effortless and safe. Fueled by her relentless drive, Bravo took a bold step in 2023, bringing New Lounge to Beverly Hills, Los Angeles. The branch is meant as a one-stop shop for beauty and wellness, offering signature Pinoy hospitality. Bravo has a degree in hotel and restaurant management, so Filipino hospitality is what she wants the world to see, and why she pushed to bring local employees abroad for their LA branch. “The work ethic of Filipinos is different. Filipinos stand out in hospitality-related fields,” she says. To date, she has brought one homegrown specialist and one branch manager to the U.S., assisting them with papers and housing, something that she also does for 90 percent of her workforce here in the Philippines. She plans to bring more.

“I want to give credit to Nanay Jojo,” Bravo says, referring to her firstborn’s nanny, who played an unexpected role in shaping her mission. Like many Filipinos, Nanay Jojo’s two daughters applied for work in a different country, and unfortunately, Bravo shares, “hindi sila tinanggap.”

It was because of these women who needed work that Bravo decided to take the leap and grow the business—to provide them, and others like them, with livelihood. Eventually, Nanay Jojo’s entire family, and even her neighbors from their barrio in Iloilo, would come to apply to work for New Lounge, setting foot for the first time in Manila as breadwinners, most battling the fear of riding an airplane for the very first time. For many, these women’s dreams were simple. But for Bravo, these simple dreams were powerful motivators, and it’s what continues to drive her to grow the business.

Despite reaching a massive milestone by opening their first branch abroad, Bravo is already planning ahead, envisioning the next phase of New Lounge to go deep into the wellness realm.

And while growth is part of success, her measure for it isn’t just limited to scaling up—it’s also about unlocking doors for others. “My role is to pursue opportunities for them,” she says. “That’s the heart of New Lounge.”

PHOTO: **KIERAN PUNAY**

The Disruptor: **Issy**

REDEFINING BEAUTIFUL HAS NEVER BEEN SO INCLUSIVE.

Like many of us, Joel Andrade struggled to find a foundation that matched the brown skin he carries with pride. “I just never found my shade,” the co-founder and creative director of makeup brand Issy says matter-of-factly. “And then some brands would even do a universal line parang, ‘Girl, in what universe is that my shade?’”

When Issy was developing their Active Skin Tint, co-founder Jasmine Ang Chua told him: “Dapat ikaw meron din.” (“There should also be a shade for you.”)

In recent years, Issy has burst onto the scene with a staggering range of shades for different Filipina skin tones, and a barrage of bold, arresting campaigns. They have gained widespread acclaim for their commitment to inclusivity, primarily from customers much like Andrade who have never been able to find the right foundation shade. To date, their Active Skin Tint, Skin Stick, and Skin Balm each offer 12 shades, and their Active Foundation boasts an astounding 27. Complementing their encompassing range and edgy campaigns is their signature futuristic packaging and the overall aesthetic of their new brick-and-mortar space, aptly called Space Issy.

But it wasn’t always like that. Issy was formerly known as Issy & Co., launched in 2019, with an identity that Andrade describes as “not rocking the boat.” The brand was pretty, promising prettiness. The pandemic halted their plans of selling in stores, which turned out to be a blessing in disguise. While other, more established brands were scrambling to set up their e-commerce, Issy & Co.’s products were already there, waiting to be purchased by eager consumers.

But the image would eventually crack. Little by little, the collections and visuals became more daring, until all that was left to change was the logo and the name. They dropped the “& Co” and just leaned fully into the opposite direction.

A lot of this revolves around one of the company’s core value—radical inclusivity—which is personal to Andrade. “If there is a spectrum of ‘conventionally beautiful,’ I was never part of that,” he says. Maitim ako, mataba ako, bakla pa ako. (“I’m dark and big, and I’m also gay.”) I’ve always felt I was at the bottom of the barrel.”

Hence, their personnel in stores have been instructed to never use the words “nakakaputi” or “nakakapayat” (“whitening” or “slimming”) when describing looks or colors, and to instead say things like, “Maganda yung color na yan sa iyo.” (“That color looks good on you.”) “It’s a lot of reframing,” he admits. “But we’ve gotten such a loyal following. They always say that Issy was the first brand that catered to them.”

At heart, Andrade is an artist, relishing the opportunity to express his creativity, to cater to others who feel like they’ve always been on the fringes. But at the end of the day, radical inclusivity also means catering to someone like Ang Chua, who doesn’t wear the crazy makeup looks that Issy has become known for. Ultimately, the brand is about products for everyone.

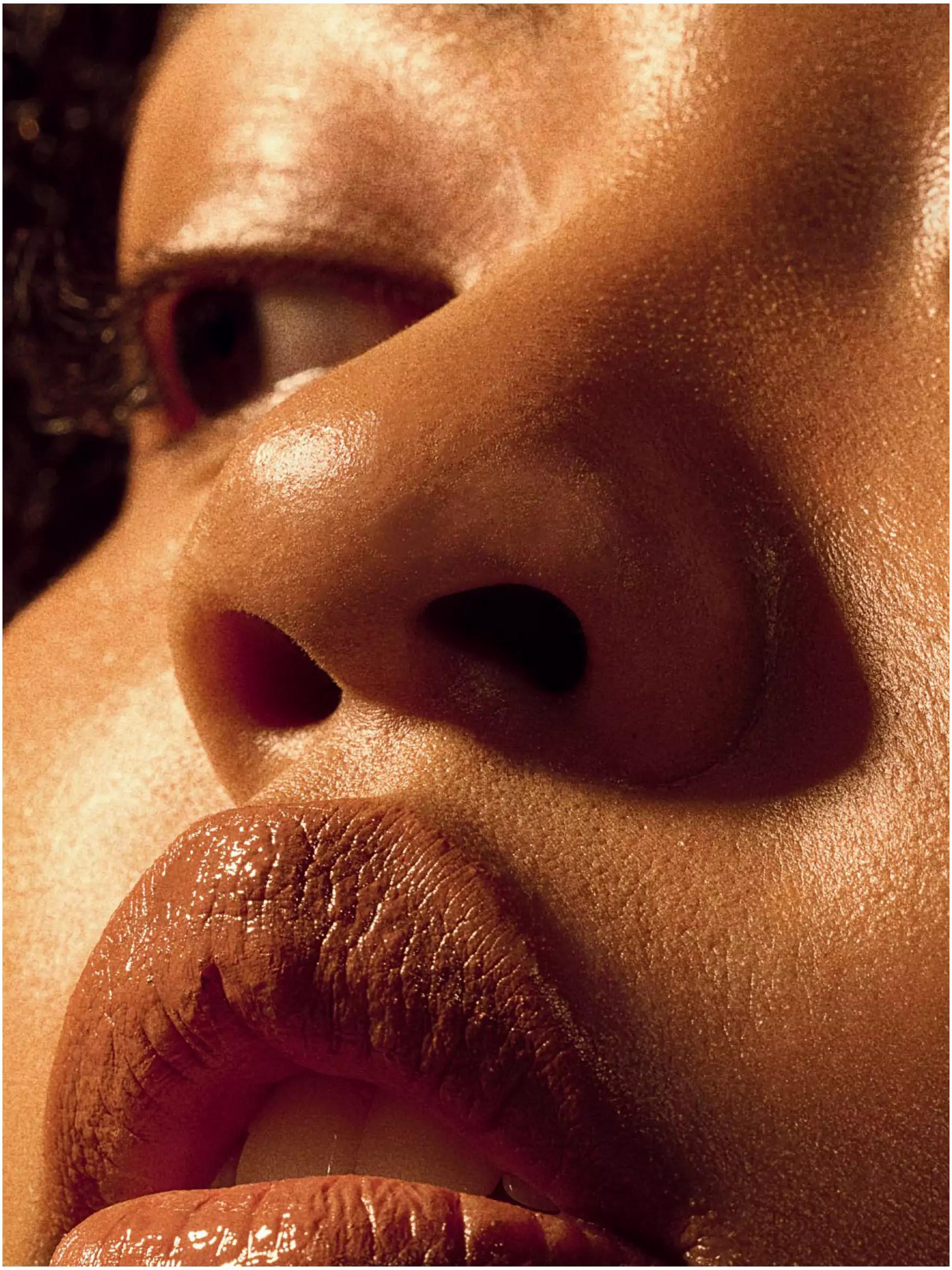
Andrade sums it up: “Here in the Philippines, beauty is pretty. But Issy is not interested in pretty. Issy is interested in beautiful. And beautiful can mean many different things to many different people.”

PHOTO: EXCEL PANLAQUE

> “Here in the Philippines, beauty is pretty. But Issy is not interested in pretty.”

The Filipino NOSE

There was a time when a flat nose was a prized feature. But then our colonizers came and changed our beauty standards. **BY PAM PASTOR**



PHOTOS: **JOSH TOLENTINO**, ASSISTED BY ROJAN MAGUYON. MAKEUP: BOOYA. HAIR: JA FELICIANO. MODEL: JESKA STA. TERESA OF PMAP.

If you believe the legend, the Filipino nose looks the way it does because once upon a time, back when people had no noses yet, a big boat was making its way around the world, handing them out. The Philippines was the last stop and so Filipinos were stuck with the noses at the bottom of the pile, the ones that had been crushed by the weight of all the other noses.

In another version of the story, a man on a boat was peddling noses of all shapes and sizes and a Filipino named Juan was given first pick. He chose a beautiful one, but he lost it. By the time he could go back for another, the best noses were gone and all that was left was the flattest one.

In yet another tale, it was raining noses and people of different races scampered, fighting to grab the best ones. Juan, smaller and slower than everyone else, had no choice but to get a nose that had been trampled upon.

The narrative may differ slightly, but the ending and the message is the same: The Filipino nose isn't a good one. It's a castoff, the nose no one else wanted.

But it wasn't always this way.

PANGO WAS LOVED—WHAT CHANGED?

"There's historical and archeological evidence that suggests that ancient Filipinos had very different preferences when it comes to facial aesthetics," says Gideon Lasco, MD, PhD, a medical anthropologist and professorial lecturer at the Department of Anthropology of the University of the Philippines-Diliman.

He cited William Henry Scott, the historian and scholar who reported that in precolonial times, there were societies in the Visayas region where women would bind and compress the heads of their babies to keep their foreheads and noses flat, as these were seen as desirable features. "Historian Henry Funtecha [also] wrote that the early Visayans considered broad faces with receding foreheads and flat noses handsome," says Dr. Lasco.

Beyond aesthetics, the structure of the Filipino nose is the way it is for a reason. "Flat noses were not just more attractive, they were also more suited to our climate," Dr. Lasco shares. "People who live in temperate regions need longer nasal bridges to have more space to humidify the cold air and make it suitable for inhalation. Those from the tropics—such as the Philippines—did not need such an adaptation because of the natural heat and humidity."

But then the Spaniards and the Americans invaded our land, changing our culture and even our beauty standards. "Colonialism changed the way we looked at our faces—and our noses," explains Dr. Lasco. "The desire to look different and foreign shifted people's aesthetic preferences to certain characteristics like fairer skin and sharper noses."

Today, it's treated as fact: pango is pangit, matangos is maganda. It's become ingrained in our collective consciousness that the Filipino nose is inferior and, in many cases, in need of fixing, perhaps with a mother's persistent pinching, a grandma's clothespins, or by contouring like a Kardashian.

THE RISE OF RHINOPLASTY

On online shopping platforms, you'll find nose shapers and lifting clips. There are medical solutions, of course, like filler injections or threads, with effects that last for one to two years. But those who want a permanent fix go for rhinoplasty, a surgical procedure that's very popular in the country. Rocelyn Ann P. Gannaban, MD, specializes in plastic, reconstructive, and aesthetic surgery and is a fellow of the Philippine Board of Plastic Surgery and the Philippine Association of Plastic, Reconstructive, and Aesthetic Surgeons. When her patients come to see her, Dr. Gannaban says that they're prepared, having done their research and with a clear goal in mind. "The majority want a more subtle change," she says. "Just themselves, but better."

She continues, "Patients automatically think that it's the bridge [where] they want definition. Of course, we can increase the height of the bridge, but what makes the most dramatic difference is changing the shape of the tip, especially on the side profile." The number one most requested nose, according to multiple plastic surgeons? Kathryn Bernardo's.

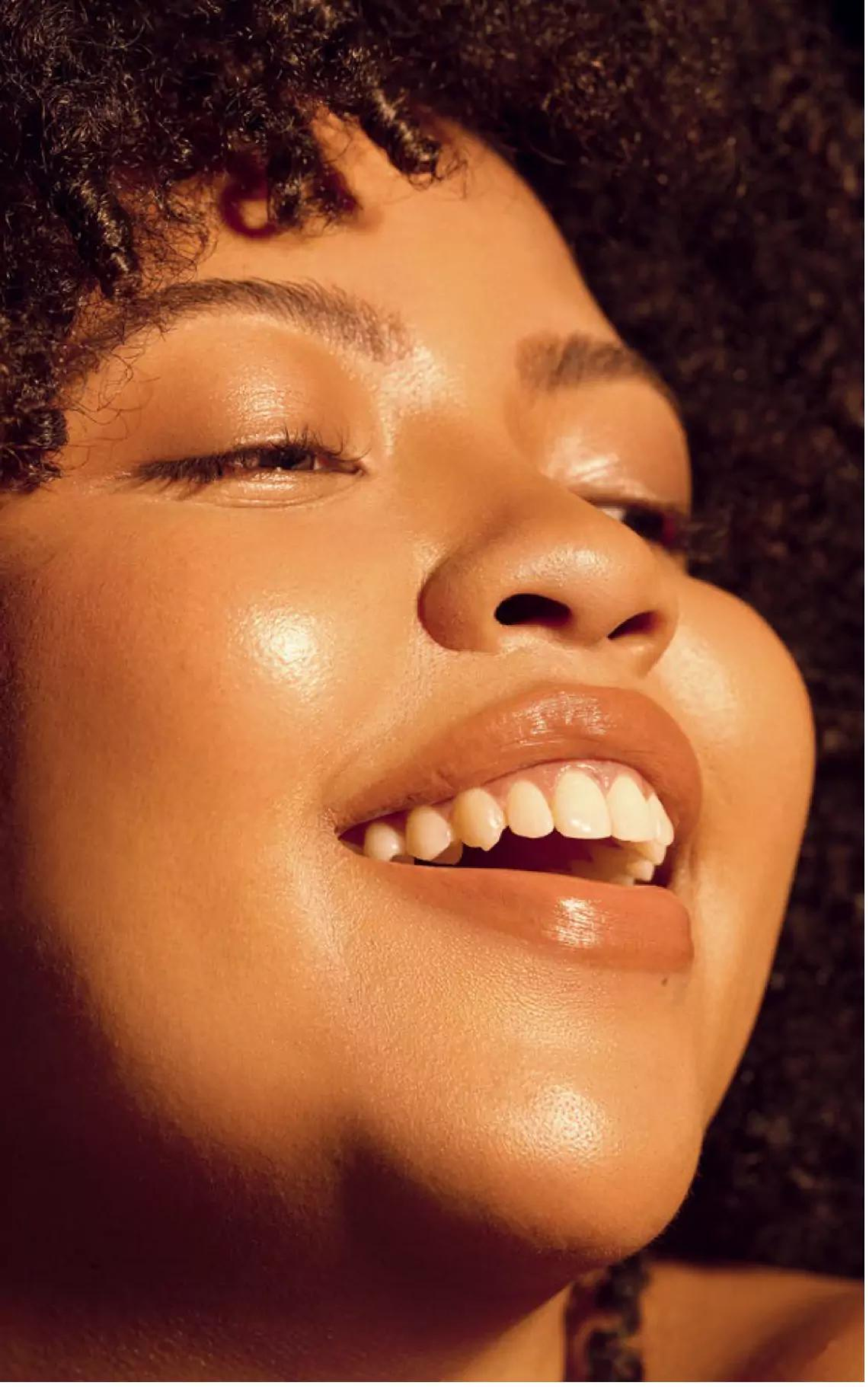
> "As a child, I didn't like my nose. But now, as an adult, I see it as an essential part of my identity."

In the past, getting plastic surgery was considered taboo—not talked about and something to be denied. But "the culture is changing," shares Nikki King-Chao, MD, an ENT head and neck surgeon who specializes in facial plastic surgery, including rhinoplasty. "Many years ago, when you had rhinoplasty, the notion was, 'Don't tell others.' Not anymore. Today, people capture their journeys online."

Take singer and content creator Mika Salamanca, who chronicled her rhinoplasty experience in a series of vlogs. In one of her videos, she said, "I really wanted it. I always thought, what if my nose was higher? Or pointier? I don't want to keep asking, 'What if?' If it can be done, why not?" Author Gwy Saludes thought the same. "I was watching a lot of TikToks and vlogs about rhinoplasty and I thought, I want to do it," she shared in a YouTube video.

If you decide that you're ready for a nose job, there are a couple more steps you have to take before going under the knife. "Generally, patients have to get psychiatric clearance," explains Angela Cuadro, MD, a general adult psychiatrist at The Medical City. "'Is this procedure being done with underlying implications of body dysmorphia?' We ask about motivations and expectations."

Dr. Gannaban adds, "We have to make sure that patients thoroughly understand that this is a surgical procedure and it's going to create a big change in their life. So we want to make sure that they're doing the procedure for the right reasons." The right surgeon is non-negotiable, too: "Rhinoplasty can really enhance how your face looks—but in good hands. If the doctor is not qualified or trained, there could be issues," says Dr. King-Chao.



Just like choosing a tattoo artist, picking a plastic surgeon is not the time to look for a bargain. Rhinoplasty can cost between PHP 100,000 to 300,000. Some places offer discounted rates of as low as PHP 50,000—but be wary. "Don't just look at the price tag," cautions Dr. Gannaban. "Some patients shop around and they look for the cheapest or what fits their budget, but in the end, they just end up spending more. They have to do a secondary procedure, because the first one didn't live up to their expectations or had an unfortunate outcome."

LOVING WHAT YOU'RE BORN WITH

Still, there are those who choose to embrace their nose exactly the way it is.

In a TikTok video, digital creator and entrepreneur Aencille Santos shared how she was teased about her nose when she was a kid. "It wasn't enough to give me crippling insecurity, but it was enough for me to remember it even as an adult," she said. And in response to a follower who asked if she has plans of getting a nose job, she replied: "I just don't think I need it in my everyday life."

Santos shares more about her story in an interview with *Allure Philippines*. "As a child, I didn't like [my nose], but now as an adult, I see it as an essential part of my identity. It's deeply rooted, a feature that I got from many generations of my family," she explains. "Maybe it's because I've grown up, but I understand that not fitting beauty standards isn't the end of the world. I've grown to find satisfaction in the features I have."

There's also Mikaela Lucido, who wrote a love letter to her Filipina nose for the website Cambio & Co. "Dear Nose, you are a gift from my Filipino ancestors," she wrote. "I am sorry for the ways I tried to reshape you." It was Lucido's therapist who suggested that she write a letter to a body part she felt insecure about. "Years later, I rarely, if ever, feel insecure about my nose," she tells *Allure Philippines*. "I look in the mirror and I feel connected to my Lola Adela, whose Filipino nose I inherited. I even see it as cute or pretty. Feeling good about my nose was unthinkable for me growing up. Ultimately, writing the love letter was so healing. It really unlocked a very much lifelong journey of unlearning self-hatred and celebrating my heritage."

In her own reflections about Filipino beauty standards, Santos also uses the word "self-hatred." "We see our own noses as unattractive, but ironically, it's what the majority of the Filipino population has," she says. "Which makes me think, is this self-hatred or what?" But "I do feel a bit more positive that there is a movement in embracing diverse beauty within our culture, evident in some online communities or spaces," she continues. "I believe we can still find balance where we're allowed to take care of ourselves and enhance our beauty through minimal ways, without the need to completely change or erase our original features." Santos' thoughts reveal how complex the conversation is around our noses—considering how deep it runs in our collective history and personal psyche, there should be room to approach it with nuance. Some learn to love their features by changing them and some get there by keeping their noses the way they are.

Content creator Airish Cupp adds to this, sharing, "Some are satisfied with the way they look. Others are getting enhancements. I have no judgement for anyone. As long as you feel good about yourself and you're confident in what you stand for, that's what matters."

"I used to have a lot of insecurities when I was younger and my nose was one of them," Cupp admits. "When I met my American husband, Matt, he gave me a confidence boost. He always tells me how beautiful I am. He loves my skin, my hair, my cute little nose. It helped me a lot to find my own beauty when I saw myself through his eyes." Today, Cupp's nose is no longer a source of insecurity for her. "I love it and I'm confident about it. I think its size and shape match my face."

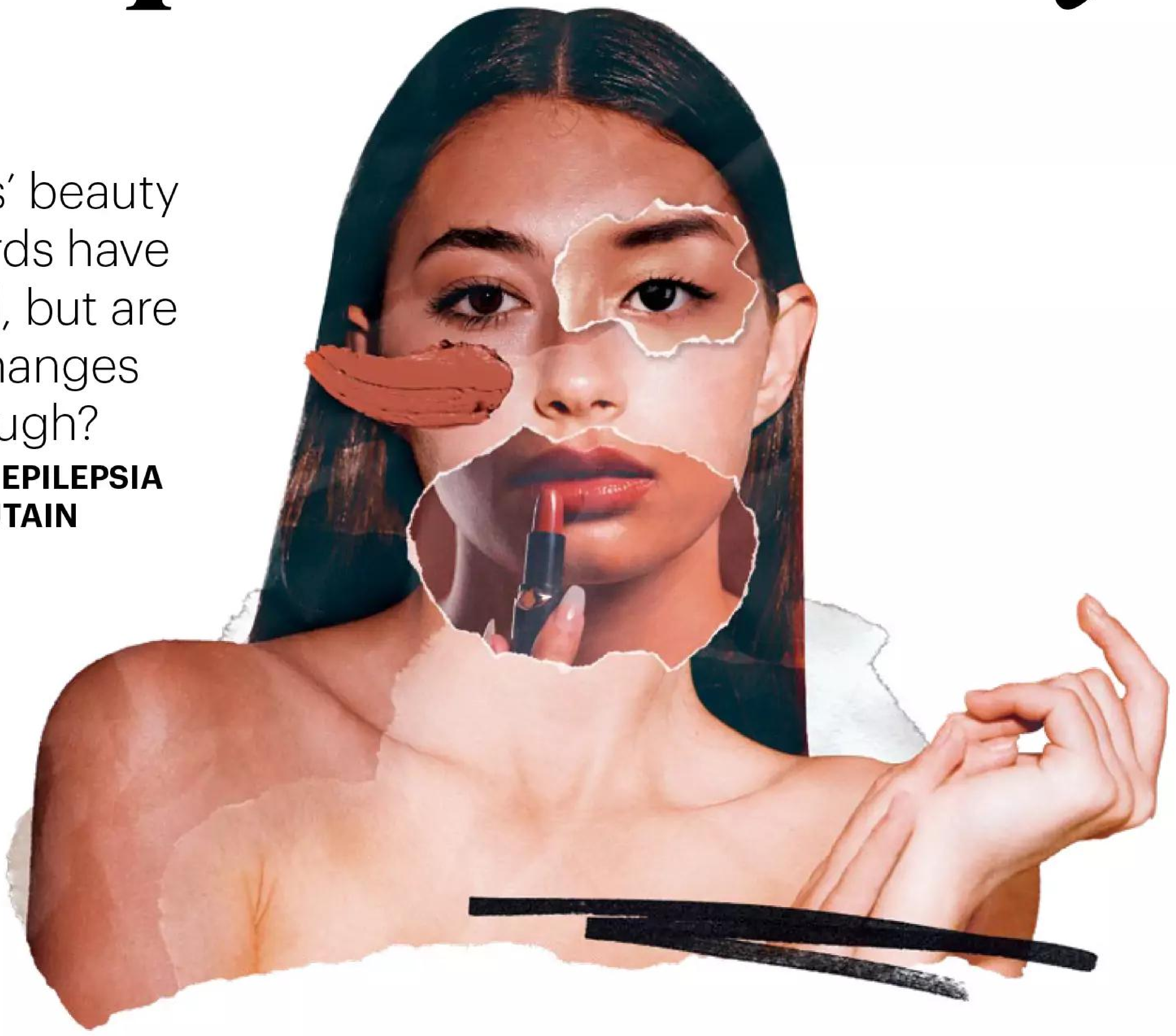
It's this same kind of confidence that she tries to instill in her daughter Mia. "My daughter looks so much like her dad, but she has a button nose like mine. She said she loves it because it's one of the features that makes her a Filipino. Her heart is so pure and her mind isn't polluted by society's toxic beauty standards. She told me once, 'Every time I look in the mirror, I get so happy because I see you.'"

"Years later, I rarely, if ever, feel insecure about my nose."

Who's Defining *Filipino Beauty?*

Filipinos' beauty standards have evolved, but are the changes enough?

BY TRINA EPILEPSIA BOUTAIN



COLLAGE: ANGELICA BACUNGAN

When the Spanish arrived in the Philippines in the 16th century, they observed that the natives had their own established notions of beauty, which varied from one community to the next. In his book *Barangay*, historian William Henry Scott noted that in the Visayas, skin was tattooed, teeth were filed and stained, and people adorned themselves with gold. Up north, the Tagalogs removed facial hair and plucked their eyebrows monthly. The women also had their own supply of makeup: "tana" eyebrow paint, "pupol" face powder, red kamuntigi nail polish, and yellow barak root for use as a skin lotion.

Many of these traditions faded away, swept aside by colonial power in favor of a homogenized beauty ideal. Over 300 years of colonization, followed by the Western domination of global media and culture, led Filipinos to adopt fair skin, long straight hair, and Eurocentric features as the beauty standard. This reality persists to this day.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE?

Filipino beauty standards have evolved significantly since the days of Maria Clara. Slowly but surely, change is happening, thanks to power shifts in various global industries and the juggernaut of the internet and social media. However, we must ask: Is this change real? Is it permanent? And is it enough?

In her thesis, *Colonial Faces: Beauty and Skin Color Hierarchy in the Philippines and the U.S.*, sociologist Joanne L. Rondilla, PhD, wrote, "Striving for ideal beauty is always a complicated issue because notions of beauty are constantly changing. This is partly to satisfy market needs and demands, and to affirm the powerful."

In a Zoom call with *Allure Philippines,* Dr. Rondilla thoughtfully discussed what is happening, especially on social media. "I think social media, at least today, has given us the illusion of the democratization of beauty standards. And the reason why it gives us that illusion is because of its reach," she says. "It gives us the illusion of democracy in action, but what it really shows is power in action because it's so easy to manipulate."

While she acknowledges moments of democratizing beauty, she observes that these "often turn toward expressions of power."

THE VIEW FROM THE OTHER SIDE

If beauty is a reflection of power, then discussions around beauty standards will involve those who wield and convey power. In our reality, this means brands, corporations, and influential individuals.

One such person is Vicki Belo, MD, who has built a beauty empire in the country with the lofty goal of making the Philippines "the most beautiful country in the world, one person at a time." Dr. Belo was instrumental in normalizing once-taboo aesthetic surgical procedures and popularizing many non-surgical treatments. Though her views are sometimes controversial, she doesn't shy away from the conversation. In an email interview, she was forthcoming about the changes she has seen in her clinics nationwide.

"Over the years, I've witnessed a significant shift in Filipino beauty standards in my line of work. In the past, there was an obsession with achieving whiter, Caucasian-looking skin. Many clients would come to my clinic specifically seeking treatments to lighten their complexion, often believing this was the ideal standard of beauty based on Western standards," she says. "Don't get me wrong, there are still Filipinos who see being white as beautiful, but I've really seen a change in what people ask for when they come to the clinic." She attributes much of the change to "the rise of social media and the global connectivity it fosters."

"Platforms like Instagram and TikTok have given Filipinos access to a broader range of beauty ideals from around the world," Dr. Belo says. "As we connect with diverse cultures, there's a growing acceptance of different skin tones and features, encouraging individuals to embrace their own unique beauty instead of conforming to a singular standard."

Changes are also evident in advertising agencies. Iea Nepomuceno, the head of culture and director of special projects at advertising agency Havas Ortega, echoes the influence of social media. "Much of the work we do in advertising includes social listening to better understand current conversations and the underlying motivations behind them... Additionally, the 'less-controlled' nature of social media compared to traditional media allows online conversations and beauty content to reflect, to a certain extent, our evolving attitudes and perceptions toward beauty."

However, she is blunt about certain realities. "'Whitening' still exists, but the language has shifted to [become] 'brightening' and 'lightening,'" Nepomuceno says. "The beauty standards around aging have definitely persisted. We continue to find more ways to look younger through skin care, makeup, and, to some extent, fitness. There's even an ongoing conversation online about how millennials can look like they're in their 20s while being in their early 40s."

AGENTS OF CHANGE

So, what have we really accomplished? Quite a lot, actually. Having worked as an editor for various titles, I've seen real, lasting change, much of it driven by the younger generation and various communities.

Globally, once-impervious Western media companies have responded to calls for more representation, spurred by the demand for diversity and inclusivity. Runways have opened up to different body types, and beauty companies have released makeup products to cover a wider spectrum of skin tones and needs. Was it all perfect? No. And we can argue that at least some of these efforts seem performative or tokenistic. But the fact that these issues are now part of conversations in boardrooms and executive offices is a win.

Traditional media has also been changing their language and stance on who—and what—is beautiful. Fashion magazines are now featuring scientists, environmentalists, and public servants on their covers—no makeovers necessary. Olympians Hidilyn Diaz and Carlos Yulo, who won gold for weightlifting and gymnastics respectively, have also helped turn the focus on fitness and health. Diaz in particular has spoken up on celebrating one's body, highlighting her muscled physique in glamorous ad campaigns and magazine features.

We need not look far. Take a look at the array of bodies in popular run clubs and yoga classes. On social media, especially in TikTok, we see people normalizing wrinkles, acne, and body hair. Influencers and regular folk alike aren't afraid to bare their bodies or dress in fashion that was once deemed reserved for supermodels. And you know what? They look amazing.

Through the noise, real discourse is happening—however chaotic.

BEAUTY IN CHAOS

When asked who or what will continue to drive change, Dr. Rondilla cautions against being too overly optimistic about where and how the change is happening. "To me, social media is not necessarily the tool; it's not where we democratize beauty. It's where we reinforce it by giving the illusion of democracy," she says. "As long as power is at play, there will always be beauty standards."

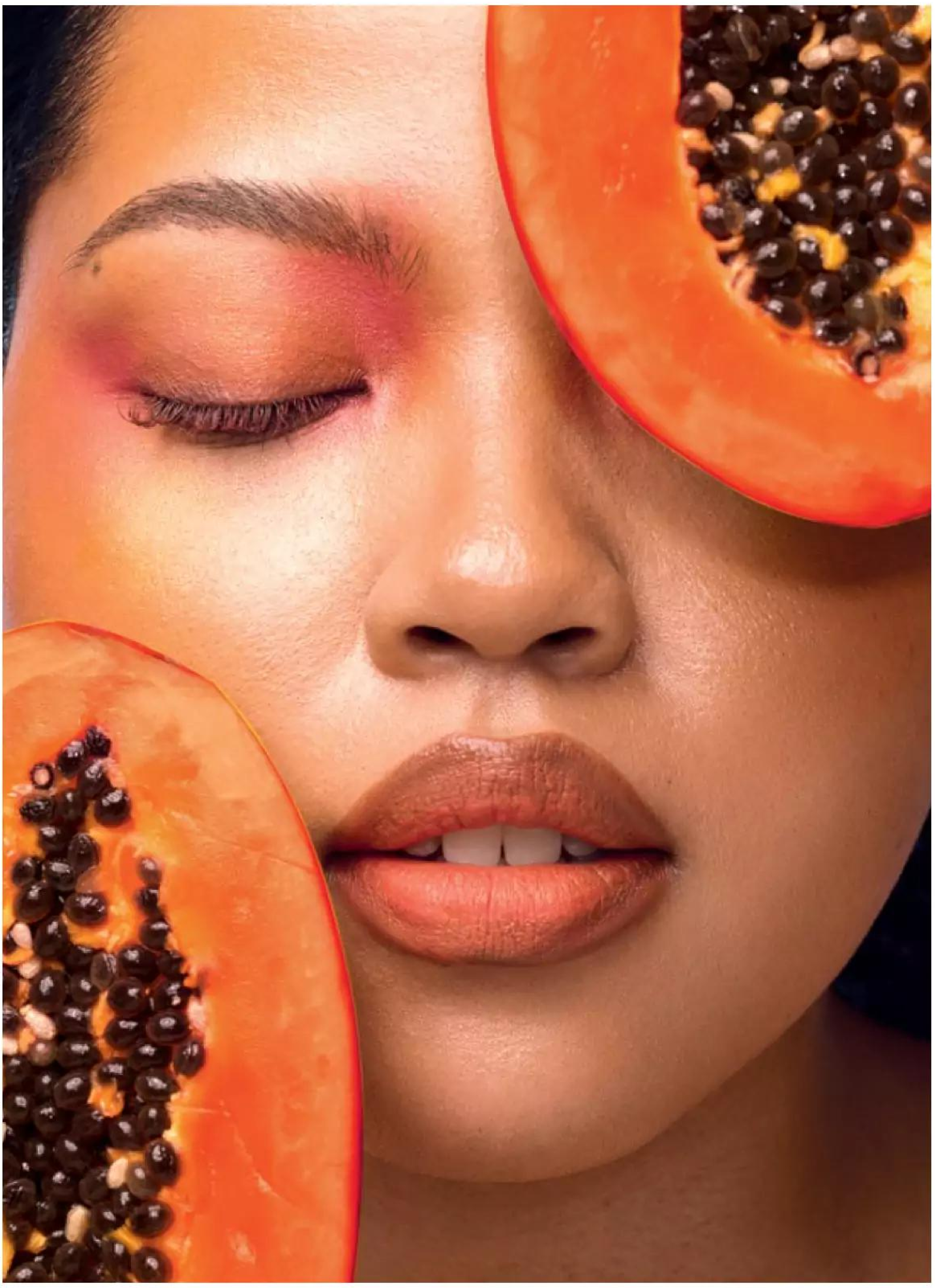
To make concrete changes, she points to education. "Education is important because, even for me, I'm still learning," she says. "When we look at beauty standards—especially when they become so oppressive—there are moments in history where a different type of beauty was celebrated." She also emphasizes the importance of niche communities: "There will always be communities that embody what possibility can look like. It's important to recognize that and seek out those spaces."

In her book *Bad Feminist*, Roxane Gay explores essential feminism and the idea that there are right and wrong ways to be a feminist. This concept could cause many to abandon the cause because they feel they don't meet all expectations or overlook the experiences of others, particularly minorities. It's perhaps similar with beauty standards, which are tied to a myriad of concepts—feminism, racism, colorism, intersectionality, and generational trauma—unfolding rapidly across populations. It will be messy, and no doubt we will get it wrong. But the discourse needs to continue because it will lead to a better understanding and, hopefully, lasting, real, positive changes for all Filipinos. The journey is odd, but somehow, beautiful.

gifts *of* our *islands*

From folk medicine to modern skin care, the Philippines' botanical treasures—papaya, coconut oil, and malunggay—are making waves in beauty. **BY MARBBIE TAGABUCBA. PHOTOGRAPHED BY JOSH TOLENTINO.**

papaya



The Spaniards may have brought papaya to the archipelago in 1551, but Filipinos have long since made it their own. First recorded in local kitchens in 1586 as a natural meat tenderizer, the fruit soon found its way into traditional medicine.

But let's be real. Papaya's claim to beauty fame in the Philippines isn't its folk medicine history—it's for supposed "skin lightening" effects. Yet, a closer look at the science behind papaya-based products tells a different story.

A deep dive into INCI Decoder, an online product ingredient database, reveals that papain—the enzyme found in papaya—isn't actually responsible for "whitening" the skin. Instead, papain gently dissolves dead, dull skin cells, revealing fresher, smoother skin underneath. The true glow-up comes from its synergy with ascorbic acid, a powerful antioxidant often added to papaya soaps to help brighten and even out skin tone—a result supported by research published in the *Pharmacognosy Review*.

TRY PAPAYA IN: Mario Badescu Enzyme Cleansing Gel, which renews dull skin with the power of papaya, and is made particularly for oily and combination skin types.

coconut

When Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan set foot on the shores of Zzubu (now Cebu) in 1521, he marveled at the island's abundance—but perhaps nothing struck him more than the radiant, well-moisturized skin of its people. Just before he met his end at the hands of the legendary Lapu-Lapu, Italian scholar Antonio Pigafetta chronicled an interesting detail: the men of the island "anointed themselves with the oil of coconuts and sesame."

Centuries later, the tradition remains. While the global frenzy around coconut oil as a miracle cure may have quieted, its staying power in beauty routines speaks volumes. Lisa Guerrero Nakpil, commissioner on the board of the National Historical Commission, explains, "Coconut oil was used to protect against the sun and wind. It was an early, effective après-sun treatment with skin-softening properties."

Science now confirms what our ancestors already knew. Coconut oil is rich in fatty acids, particularly lauric acid, known for its antimicrobial, antibacterial, and anti-inflammatory properties. Virgin coconut oil (VCO) is especially potent, with a high concentration of lauric acid. According to the intergovernmental organization Asian Pacific Coconut Community, "cold pressing"—a natural method that extracts oil without heat—helps retain more of these beneficial compounds, making VCO a prized ingredient in modern skin care.

TRY COCONUT IN: VMV Hypoallergenic Id Monolaurin Gel, a skin-clarifying gel whose hero ingredient, monolaurin, is derived from coconut.

> "Coconut was used as an early and effective aprés-sun treatment with skin-softening properties."

malunggay

Malunggay (globally known as moringa) is the underrated hero of Philippine beauty. While its superfood status is well-established—it's a staple in dishes like tinola and a go-to supplement for wellness—its rise in skin care is only just beginning.

At the heart of malunggay's beauty benefits is its nutrient-dense seed oil, packed with monounsaturated fatty acids that lock in moisture for soft, supple skin. But its magic doesn't stop there—rich in flavonoids and phenolic acids, malunggay oil also helps protect skin by preventing the oxidation of linoleic acid, a key component for maintaining skin health. Research published in the *South African Journal of Botany* confirms that malunggay-based products deliver deep hydration and antioxidant benefits, making them a powerhouse in skin care.

And beauty brands are taking notice. Global heavyweights like Clarins and The Body Shop have incorporated malunggay into their formulations, recognizing its potent skin care properties. But it's not just the oil that's winning in beauty—malunggay leaf extract is proving to be a game-changer, too. A study in *Advances in Dermatology and Allergology* revealed that participants who used a cream containing three percent concentrated moringa leaf extract saw significant improvements in skin texture, volume, and smoothness after just three months.

From folk medicine to high-performance skin care, malunggay has evolved from a humble kitchen staple to a beauty powerhouse—one that's only beginning to get the global recognition it deserves.

TRY MALUNGGAY IN: Clarins Total Cleansing Oil, a makeup remover that cleans dry to oily skin types, while nourishing it with malunggay seed extract.

> "Malunggay has evolved from a humble kitchen staple to a beauty powerhouse."

PHOTOGRAPHER'S ASSISTANT: ROJAN MAGUYON. MAKEUP: BOOYA.
HAIR: JA FELICIANO. MODEL: JESKA STA. TERESA OF PMAP.

SUSTAINABLE BEAUTY IS *homegrown*

How Filipino beauty brands are reviving a culture of sustainability

BY ANYA GRANADOS

Filipinos grow up knowing bayanihan, which is manifested through collaborative efforts forming a sense of community. With bayanihan at the core of our culture, we didn't just live alongside each other—we thrived together, building relationships that extended to the natural world. We knew how to depend on nature for our survival, while also making sure it had enough time to recover from how much it was giving us. Our way of life was deeply intertwined with the environment, and we understood that balance was key.

However, with the advent of industrialization brought by our colonizers, the practice of bayanihan with our environment slowly began to fade. The rise of mass production and consumerism shifted our focus away from sustainability and harmony, both with each other and with the earth. Over time, we saw fewer pandan bayongs and more plastic shopping bags; less banana leaf packaging, and more styrofoam and other plastic containers.

What we once had was a culture of intentional consumption and production, where nature was right at the heart of our values. We used to put people and the planet above profit, but somewhere along the way, we began to forget this, and now, in a world dominated by convenience and disposable products, three brands are reminding us that conscious beauty is not about all that we've lost, but all that we can still save.

Simula is a locally grown sustainable-goods store with over 70 partner brands that offer zero-waste and eco-friendly products. Co-founder Celina Alejandrino defines conscious beauty as the practice of intentional consumerism. "It's choosing brands that prioritize ethical sourcing, sustainability, or skin-friendly ingredients," she tells *Allure Philippines*. "In the Philippines, traditional beauty standards have long been influenced by fair skin, Western features, and mass-market products. Conscious beauty shifts the focus from aesthetics to overall well-being, self-expression, and environmental responsibility."

Similarly, Hanna Felipe, co-founder of Pili Ani, defines conscious beauty as the act of slowing down and making more mindful, informed choices, enabling us to view consumption from a different lens. Pili Ani champions locally-made products derived from elemi oil extracted from pili trees. "It's this shift in mindset that moves away from beauty as an aesthetic ideal and toward beauty as an intentional practice that considers impact," Felipe says. "Conscious beauty challenges external ideals, advocating for authenticity, celebrating community, and respecting heritage."

For Bea Misa Crisostomo, founder of Ritual, a general

PHOTOS: JOE LINGEMAN

merchandise store that caters to eco-friendly, organic, and locally-made products, conscious beauty is about living simply and focusing on overall health. "For me, conscious beauty is just living in such a way that you have a simple beauty routine, but focus more on your whole body health—eating right, exercising, getting sleep, [and] reducing stress," she says.

Crisostomo adds that the term "sustainable" can often be misunderstood or oversimplified. "The word 'sustainable' is really broad. It can be relative, and sometimes we end up splitting hairs," she explains. "Every consumer and producer needs to think about beauty today compared to a few decades ago. How excessive is our product consumption? How many products do we really need?" She goes on to emphasize the importance of rethinking our consumption patterns, pointing out how excessive product use has become the norm. "Do we really need 15 different products, all wrapped in plastic and shipped from various parts of the world?" she presses.

As the shift towards sustainability gains momentum globally, Filipino brands are rethinking their sourcing practices and packaging choices. In fact, more Filipino experts are calling for more resource efficiency and environmental stewardship in manufacturing, agriculture, and tourism, according to the Philippine Institute of Development Studies. Simula walks the talk by strictly partnering with brands committed to eco-friendly alternatives, offering refillable systems that allow consumers to refill used packaging with everyday necessities and using packaging materials that either dissolve in water (cassava) or decompose (sugar cane, corn starch, potato starch, and wood pulp). Alejandrino explains, "We curate and sell products that prioritize sustainability, helping our fellow Filipinos shift to low-waste alternatives without compromising quality." Simple swaps from Simula can include switching out cotton pads for menstrual cups, and traditional ziplocks for resealable silicone packs.

Ritual takes a similar approach by minimizing plastic use and focusing on simple, oil-based formulations. Crisostomo says, "For our own items, we make sure to really know where our raw materials are from. It's not that easy to trust suppliers, online or not. Sometimes you see ingredients labeled as extracts—those extracts have further ingredients that are unlisted. You encounter one oil sold as another. We try to purchase, even our imported ingredients, from growers or those who can vet their direct suppliers. It's not perfect, but it creates simple and good products." Examples include asin tibook, which comes directly from saltmakers in Bohol, and tapuey, otherwise known as Ilocos Norte's version of sweet rice wine.

Meanwhile, Pili Ani proudly puts sustainability at the heart of its operations, sourcing natural ingredients from their Bicol-based pili tree farm and minimizing waste by creating products repurposed from leftover materials. One example is their Volcanic Scrub Bar, which Felipe shares is made of pili nut shells. "Even volcanic ash from Mount Mayon, a natural exfoliant, finds its place in our Deep Detox Volcanic Exfoliating Mask," she adds. "By engaging in fair-trade practices and ensuring sustainable harvesting methods, we support local and preserve biodiversity."

But of course, sustainability is a journey, and for brands, it often feels like baby steps in the face of significant challenges. As Alejandrino notes, the lack of infrastructure for sustainable production in the Philippines, such as recycling systems and refill stations, makes it difficult to scale these initiatives. Additionally, Crisostomo points to logistical hurdles in the country, specifically with shipping. "Very few shippers will agree to ship items without plastic," she highlights how many brands face pressure to use excess plastic packaging, mainly due to packaging regulations, when selling through third party platforms.

Despite these challenges, brands continue to push for systemic change and further accountability in the beauty industry. "It takes a few companies with scale to just bite the bullet and have principles," Crisostomo adds. "Until policy catches up, they [brands] will just have to sacrifice some profit to pave the way."

Even with the challenges they face, these brands are unwavering in their commitment to creating a more sustainable future. As Felipe puts it, "Filipinos are naturally inclined to recycle. We see this in the thriving 'thrift culture' in homes, where cookie tins are used as sewing kits, ice cream tubs as frozen food containers, and clothes being re-used as rags. Filipinos have always been resourceful, and in many ways, that's sustainability in action. So why can't brands go all in on sustainability?" Just as bayanihan encourages us to work in harmony with each other and nature, these brands are fostering that same spirit. They're reimagining a more sustainable and balanced future, and redefining success—not by the margins they turn, but by the values they uphold.

EMBRACING your *kulot*

Put the straightener down: Your natural curls deserve better.

BY LEIRA AQUINO

In the Philippines, frizzy, dry, and rebonded hair is a common sight. At first glance, you might think it's just a case of unruly strands, but look a little closer, and you'll see something else: It's hair that's meant to be curly, but forced to be straight!

Rebonding, a popular chemical process that straightens hair, is often seen as a "fix" for those with wavy or curly hair. The Pinay's obsession with straight hair doesn't come as a surprise. We all remember watching shampoo and conditioner showing models with hair so long, bouncy, and shiny, a comb could effortlessly glide through the strands.

For years, straight hair has been the beauty ideal, while curls have been sidelined, or even mocked. Remember the lyric "basta kulot, salot" ("curly hair is a plague") from Parokya ni Edgar's *Buloy* that has been weaponized to bully anyone with naturally curly hair?

Growing up surrounded by beauty standards that favor straight hair, it's easy to feel like your curls just don't measure up. Fashion designer and milliner Mich Dulce, known for her beautiful curls, knows the struggle well. "The challenge was never really about maintaining my curls. It was more about the social issues that come with curly hair in a country where beauty standards are always about straight, long hair," she says.

When she was a little girl, Dulce's grandmother would tell her to straighten her hair because her curls were "not nice." Some kids even bullied her by throwing paper at her hair to see if it would get stuck. But Dulce never gave in to permanent straightening treatments, thanks to her mom, who always encouraged her to embrace her curls. "I think that's the main contributor, right?" she says. Had her mom not encouraged her to keep it curly, she would've given in to the societal pressures.

"And now it's kind of like my trademark," she says with a smile.

Dulce had a moment as a teenager that helped change her perspective: "Hair is made of the same thing as your skin, it's the same cells as your skin and your nails," someone once told her. This realization helped her accept her hair's natural texture and understand that curls are nothing to hide.

Part of embracing curls is learning how to care for them. Many Filipinas grow up without the know-how to care for their natural curls, instead being bombarded by suggestions, even from hair care professionals, to just straighten their hair.

So, *Allure Philippines* turned to the hair experts: Jasmine Baker, curly hair advocate, hairstylist, and owner of Quezon City-based salon Cutz and Curlz; Cherry Reyes, veteran hairstylist and Toni & Guy Philippines master franchisee; and Lourd Ramos, celebrity hairstylist and creative director of his eponymous salon. Together, they share their best tips for embracing and maintaining healthy, beautiful curls.

THE FIRST STEP: GET A HAIRCUT AND GROW OUT YOUR NATURAL CURLS

Starting the journey to wearing your natural curls can feel intimidating, especially if you've been using chemical treatments for years. But the first step is often a big chop! All our experts agree: "You must have the courage to embrace your natural curls, which may involve trimming your rebonded ends or even doing a big chop," says Baker. Acceptance will begin to grow with this step, she believes. Ramos suggests that a drastic cut (if you have rebonded hair) is key to seeing your true texture. "This is always the case at the salon, and it will take a year to get rid of the rebonded part," he says. Reyes also believes that cutting off straightened ends is vital before transitioning to curly-friendly routines.

Cutting your hair can be scary, but as Baker says, one thing you need is patience. She acknowledges that it's tough for some, especially for those who think curly hair is high-maintenance. But she insists that with confidence, anyone can pull off their curls. "If you have

PHOTO: **JOSH TOLENTINO**, ASSISTED BY ROJAN MAGUYON. MAKEUP: BOOYA. HAIR: JA FELICIANO. MODEL: SOPHIA SANTAMARIA OF PMAP.

confidence, not only will you look and feel beautiful, but you'll also find happiness in being yourself," she says.

GO WITHOUT SUDS: USE SULFATE-FREE SHAMPOO

The Curly Girl Method is a hair care routine designed specifically for curly hair, and it has one key rule: avoid sulfates. "Using a gentle, sulfate-free shampoo cleanses without drying out the curls," advises Reyes. Since curly hair tends to be more dry by nature, shampoos containing sulfates and silicones can dehydrate it further by stripping away its natural oils.

Baker also recommends moisturizing formulas to keep your curls hydrated. It's important to know your curly hair type when picking products. For curls that are thick and coarse, **Cantu Hair's Shea Butter Sulfate-Free Cleansing Cream Shampoo** is a good option. For fine, curly hair, she recommends brands like Aveda, Davines, and Schwarzkopf.

In general, Baker recommends **K18 Detox Shampoo Peptide Prep**. "It's a gentle clarifying shampoo to fight against build up, sweat, pollution, etc., but feels soft, moisture after one wash," she says. There are also affordable local options like **Curlssential Gentle Clarifying Curl Shampoo** and more from other brands like Baker's own The Curlz Next Door, Curlico, and Luxe Organix.

DON'T SKIP THIS: CONDITIONER IS A MUST

It's your curls' best friend when it comes to locking in moisture and keeping frizz under control. Baker says conditioning is a must for curly hair for "detangling and hydration purposes." For these, the **Davines Love Curl Conditioner** does the job well. Meanwhile, Dulce trusts **Herbal Essences Coconut Water & Jasmine Hydrated & Refreshed Conditioner**.

There's a lot of debate about whether or not to wash your hair every day—and let's be honest, it's a pain not to be able to do so in our tropical climate—but Ramos says shampooing daily isn't an issue as long as you follow up with conditioner. "Apply it on the ends, not the roots," he advises.

Reyes also suggests conditioning regularly and deep conditioning weekly to "combat dryness," a tip that Baker fully supports: "Incorporating a deep conditioning treatment into your routine provides extra moisture," she explains.

LEAVE IT IN: ADD CURL-DEFINING PRODUCTS

For long-lasting curl hold, Baker suggests applying a leave-in conditioner like the **Amika Hydro Rush Intense Moisture Leave In Conditioner** or curling cream, followed by a mousse or gel. If you need a wash-and-go routine, streamline your products: Wavy and curly hair can benefit from a mousse for hold and definition, while coily hair will benefit from both a mousse and gel to lock in the shape.

For best results, it's important (again) to know your hair and curl type. For tighter curls, Reyes says to opt for heavier creams or gels. For loose curls, she recommends using lightweight creams or soufflé-type formulas to enhance curls without weighing them down. For wavy hair, Reyes advises using a sea salt spray for texture and volume, followed by a hair smoothing mist. The Label M range, tested by Toni & Guy hairstylists, is a good place to start for these products.

LEARNING TO LOVE YOUR CURLS

There's no shame in admitting that at some point, you might have tried to change your natural curls. But you're reading this, and that means you've already done—or are likely interested in overcoming—the hardest part: accepting your curls and breaking free from beauty standards favoring straight hair. Take it from curly-haired girls like Baker: "To start embracing our natural hair, we must recognize that it is part of our identity," she says. "Loving ourselves is the highest form of confidence, and that's where it begins."

Baker's curly hair routine involves using the right products and giving your hair extra TLC, but there's also another way to embrace your curls, which is Dulce preferred approach: just letting your hair be. "For me, my whole life, it was like, 'Oh my gosh, should I put baby oil? Should I put mousse? Should I put gel?'" Dulce reflects. "I don't do any of that now. I wake up, shampoo and comb my hair in the shower, put on [leave-in] conditioner, and I'm done." She continues, "For me, that's even more straightforward than having straight hair, right? It's so easy and it's so fast. And every day it looks fine," she adds.

For Dulce, finding the right products is, of course, still important, but she believes it's freeing to leave the house without worrying about what products to use. And whichever approach you choose, remember: It's your hair, your say.

THE 3 COMMANDMENTS OF CURLY HAIR

1. Go easy on the heat.
Heat styling can seriously affect your curls, so if you're on a journey to healthier hair, it might be time to dial back on the tools. "Protecting curls starts with minimizing heat styling," Cherry Reyes, a veteran stylist with Toni & Guy Philippines, emphasizes.

Jasmine Baker, a hairstylist with curly hair herself, also stresses the importance of using heat protectants before reaching for your blow dryer or flat iron. "I understand that Filipinas like to change their hairstyles from time to time, so a blowout can be necessary," she explains. "However, it's important to remember that high heat can cause damage, so always use a heat protectant to prevent harm from heat tools."

The **BrioGeo Farewell Frizz Heat Protectant**, is a favorite of Baker's. "This will help keep your hair from drying out quickly this summer," she says.

2. Protect your curls from humidity.
"Filipinas with curly hair often face frizz, dryness, and difficulty maintaining curl definition, especially in our humid tropical climate," Reyes points out. To keep our curls in check in our weather, Reyes suggests using a leave-in conditioner and a humidity shield. The **Color Wow Dream Coat Supernatural Spray**, known for its frizz-fighting and humidity-proofing powers, is a go-to choice among hairstylists for curly hair. Baker also recommends **Aveda Be Curly Advance Coil Definer Gel**, a lightweight styling hair gel "ideal for those who want long-lasting hold and frizz control." She also advises making regular washes a part of your routine to remove excess oil and buildup.

3. Give your hair an occasional treat.
If you're dealing with heat damage from styling tools or chemical damage from treatments like rebonding, coloring, or perming, Baker recommends going for a repairing treatment, "such as K18 and Olaplex to help repair and strengthen your hair and curls." For hair that's never been exposed to heat or chemicals, Baker suggests a curly hair treatment to moisturize and nourish curls. The **Kerastase Curl Manifesto Treatment** is designed for curly, coily, and wavy hair.

“You don’t need a boarding pass to explore. Your dream summer can start right where you are.”

HOW TO LIVE YOUR *DREAM* SUMMER

WITH YOUR *DREAM* SPF

There's just something about summer that makes everything feel possible. Maybe it's the longer days, the golden light, or the way everyone suddenly seems to be chasing their best lives. Whether it's signing up for that pottery class, joining your neighborhood run club, or booking that long-awaited beach escape, summer is a chance to say yes—to new goals, new experiences, and the version of you you've always wanted to be.

So what makes a dream summer? It starts with saying yes to spontaneity. Try something you've never done before. Pick up a new hobby. Push your boundaries. These are the moments that turn into the memories you'll revisit again and again.

A dream summer also means getting outside—no, you don't need a boarding pass. From sun-drenched city strolls to discovering underrated gems in your own neighborhood, summer is the perfect time to explore. But remember: The sun doesn't take days off.

That's where a smart skin strategy comes in. First, hydration—inside and out. Water is non-negotiable, especially in rising temps. And just like your body, your skin needs extra care too. Think of sunscreen as your summer skin care essential, not just for the beach, but for the every day.

Here's the truth: Sun damage is sneakier than you think. It doesn't always show up immediately, but over time, it can lead to dark spots, uneven tone, and dryness that keeps you from reaching your skin goals—even when you're already doing the cleanse-and-cream routine. So what's missing? SPF—and the right kind.

That's where POND'S UV Miracle Sunscreen comes in—a skincare essential from the POND'S Skin Institute that does more than just protect. With SPF 50 PA++++, it shields your skin from harmful UVA and UVB rays while delivering skin care through powerful ingredients. The Bright variant, infused with NIASORCINOL™, helps fade dark spots and evens out skin tone, while the Hydrate variant, powered by HYA-CERAMIDE, leaves your skin supple, moisturized, and with an improved skin barrier. And because the formula is ultra-light, it's blendable, easily absorbed, and feels air light—for effortless wear, every day.

So whether your dream summer is made of weekend hikes, gym dates, coffee crawls, or quiet moments in the sun—you can live it out without compromising your skin. Because summer isn't just a season—it's a mindset. And POND'S UV Miracle Sunscreen makes sure that you're protected to glow for it.

Miracles do happen. And with your dream SPF, POND'S UV Miracle Sunscreen, your dream summer just got even better.

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> “SPF isn’t just for your face—your whole body deserves the same protection.”

#DramaProofSkin *for a carefree summer*

Live your whole summer freely without any skin worries!

Our skin is the largest organ in our body, a barrier that regulates our body's temperature, and protects us against external factors like the sun's rays. Most of the time, we pay extra attention to the skin on our face—and with good reason. Your face is the first thing people notice. But you shouldn't forget that your skin covers the rest of your body as well. Taking care of it, like any other part of your body, means more than just cleansing and hydrating it, but most of all, protecting it—especially parts that are always exposed to the glare of the sun, like our back, arms, and legs. The sun's harmful rays can cause sun drama, damaging our skin and causing dryness, dullness and dark spots, doing a number on our confidence and preventing us from fully appreciating our bodies and making the most out of summer.

With the hot days of summer in full swing, there are also more chances to celebrate your body—whether it's doing your favorite sports or activities outdoors, enjoying the beach with your family and friends, or just dressing in skin-revealing clothes to cope with the infamous scorching temperatures of the Philippine summer. But do you find yourself hesitating to do so through covering up your skin and hiding from the sun because of all the sun drama your body might experience, such as stickiness, dullness, dry skin, or even pigmentation from the sun? Don't worry, we've got the perfect solution to drama proof your skin so that you can bask in the glow of summer!

Vaseline, a trusted skin care brand with a heritage rooted in skin health, offers products that provide visibly proven skin benefits, so that you can get bright, healthy-looking skin you'd love to live in.

The Vaseline Gluta Hya SPF 50 PA+++ Luminous Defense Serum Lotion comes in a lightweight, fast-absorbing formula reminiscent of your favorite serum. It uses Vaseline's pioneering serum burst technology that bursts into water droplets upon application so your skin instantly drinks it up. The Vaseline Gluta Hya SPF 50 PA+++ Luminous Defense Serum Lotion is also a hard worker, delivering moisturizing benefits with 4D Hyaluron for deep skin hydration within the epidermis, and brightening uneven skin tone with its GlutaGlow™ Technology. You get all these skin benefits in one product—bright, sun-protected skin without the unpleasant sticky feeling.

Summertime is all about being carefree. And there's nothing better than enjoying those long, sunny days with the knowledge that you've taken care of yourself with only the best your skin deserves. Loving your body means loving every inch of your skin, so that you can leave all your skin dramas behind, and celebrate your #DramaProofSkin anywhere, anytime with Vaseline.

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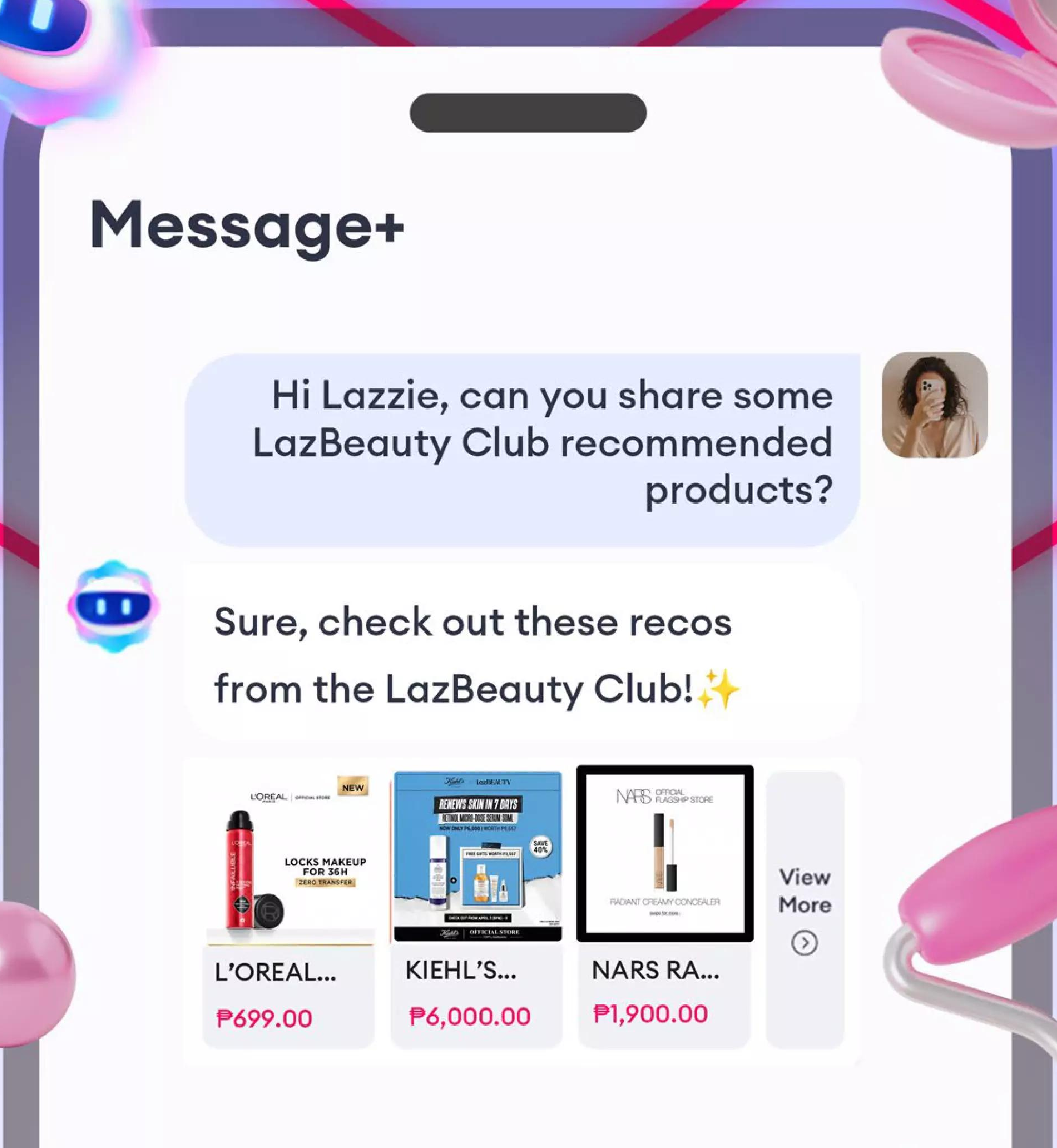

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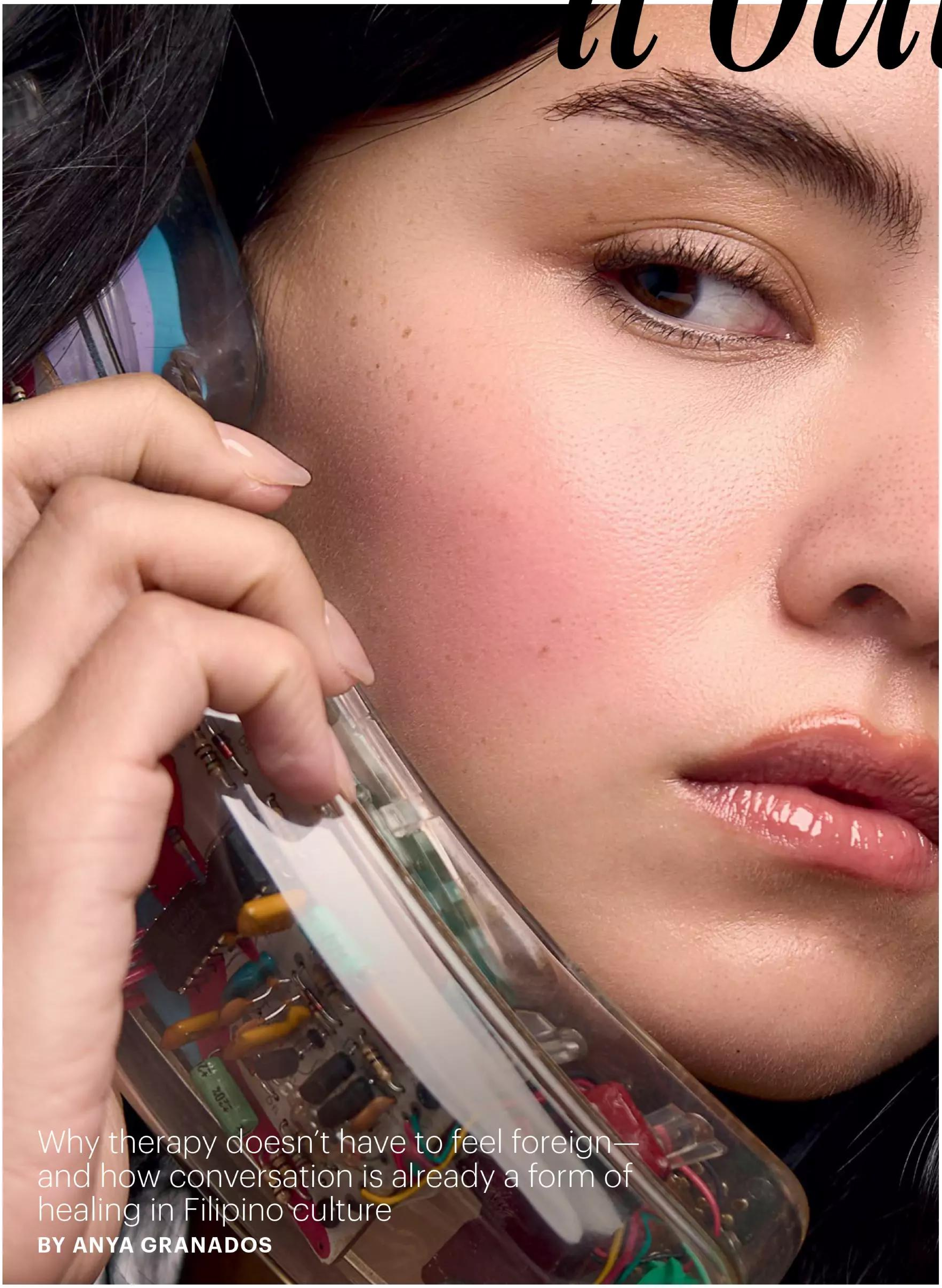
TALKING *it out*



Why therapy doesn't have to feel foreign—and how conversation is already a form of healing in Filipino culture

BY ANYA GRANADOS

PHOTO: **KIERAN PUNAY**. MAKEUP: KENRIC CARPIO. HAIR: JAARON GO. MODEL: LARA OF LUMINARY MODELS.

When 25-year-old nurse Cara* from Laguna first walked into therapy, she wasn't in crisis, but she was carrying a quiet weight. "Therapy makes my thoughts and feelings feel tangible," she says. "When you work things out with a professional, you discover thought patterns you might have never recognized without someone else's help."

For Cara, talk therapy became a safe space to explore her emotions, confront her past, and build healthier mental habits. And she's not alone. More Filipinos are starting to discover that therapy isn't just for breakdowns—it's a proactive way to understand yourself better.

In fact, therapy might not be as foreign as it seems. Long before it had a name, Filipinos have always believed in the power of talking things out—whether it's through late-night heart-to-hearts with a barkada, unburdening to a tita over merienda, or seeking comfort in church confession. Therapy, in many ways, is simply a more structured version of what we already know: that healing often begins with conversation.

THE POWER OF VULNERABILITY

"I feel like I, along with many other kids, grew up believing that we should be able to handle our emotions on our own," Cara admits. "I asked my parents about going to therapy at a young age and got chastised for it. Therapy was seen as something you only needed when you were at an all-time, sometimes dangerous low. So for a long time I believed I shouldn't need it."

That mindset is changing—but slowly. In many Filipino households, emotional struggles are still seen as private matters, often brushed aside with phrases like "Kaya mo 'yan" or "Dasal lang." But if we look closer, conversation has always been part of our cultural DNA. Whether through family counsel, spiritual leaders, or even bonding with friends over pulutan, we seek healing in connection.

"One of the most common ways Filipinos cope with problems is by talking to people they trust," says Fab Calipara, RPsy, licensed psychologist and founder of Fully Psych. Talk therapy simply gives structure and safety to something Filipinos already value—pag-uusap—allowing them to process their experiences, transform their mindsets, and ultimately grow. "One of its greatest benefits is that it helps Filipinos articulate their emotions without fear of judgment or condemnation—something that has traditionally been difficult in our culture," Calipara adds.

Professional therapy fosters not only healing, but also emotional intelligence—something that has often been discouraged in environments where vulnerability is misunderstood or dismissed.

BRIDGING TO PROFESSIONAL THERAPY THROUGH COMMUNITY

This is where community talk therapy comes in—a gateway for Filipinos to ease into professional mental health care. Since Filipinos often find strength in numbers, talk therapy in group or communal settings can be especially effective, says Jamina Vesta Jugo, PhD, a Germany-based Filipina academic whose work intersects gender, race, and migration issues. "When patients see that they are not alone in their problem, they might feel less ashamed of it," she says.

Dr. Jugo points out that talk therapy within a community can help transcend the disadvantages of "classical" psychology, which tends to place the burden solely on the individual while ignoring social or environmental factors. "This is especially important in the Philippines, where mental health issues are so often met with stigma and misunderstanding. Patients might also find fulfillment in supporting others in a group setting, and it is in this sense of mutuality and communality where this kind of talk therapy shines."

In the Philippines, community-based conversations can also take more spiritual forms—whether through prayer groups, church confession, astrology, or tarot. For Cara, tarot readings serve as a complementary practice to therapy. "Tarot feels like an art. [While] therapy is analysis and study of what you're feeling, what patterns show up, and how you can correct them in the long term."

> "Filipinos are learning to embrace a form of healing that isn't new at all—it's rooted in usap, in community, in human connection."

But there's a line. While spiritual or community practices can offer comfort, they shouldn't replace professional help. Cara also acknowledges this danger, stating, "Beyond tarot, I think believing that a higher power will take care of every single problem you face is a little unrealistic. You're removing the agency from your own life." This is why Dr. Jugo warns that community talk therapy should not replace professional therapy. The same applies to those who rely solely on spiritual guidance—while these practices can provide comfort, combining them with professional help ensures a more holistic approach to healing.

HEALING THROUGH CONVERSATION

Whether it happens in a private session or a group setting, therapy starts with one thing: conversation. "The best approach might be to have a wide circle, or multiple circles," says Dr. Jugo. "We have to remember that those we seek talk therapy with have their limits and biases—including professional therapists, too. But because we find ourselves partly through interacting with others, it is through communicating with many types of people that we come to appreciate the multi-faceted nature of ourselves and others. I would say this insight is at the core of any kind of therapy."

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mindset over *meltdown*

How mental strength and preparation separate champions from the rest—on and off the field. **BY ANYA GRANADOS**

We all know the feeling: tight schedules, big decisions, people counting on you—and that little voice in your head whispering, *What if I can't pull this off?* There's a word for it: pressure. And while we often associate that word with high-stakes games or Olympic races, the truth is, it's something we all face, every single day.

As it turns out, the kind of mental strength that helps elite athletes perform under intense pressure isn't just reserved for them. It's a skill—and a form of self-care—we can all build. Whether you're a student, a CEO, a new mom, or just trying to keep up with your life's demands, training your mind can be just as transformative as training your body.

For Erika Dy, that connection is personal. A former competitive athlete turned lawyer, and now executive director of the national sports association Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas, she brings that same inner toughness into a different kind of arena.

When she was still active on the court, she would, as she puts it, "imagine all the potential scenarios in my head before a game, thinking ahead about what I should do." She adds, "That helped me be a more effective basketball player. It's the same for work and life in general—just going through the next day in my head the night before helps me navigate it much better." Her story reminds us that you don't need to wear a jersey to build mental strength—you just need to show up for yourself with intention and care.

THE INNER GAME

To better understand the mental training that powers athletes—and how it can translate into everyday life—*Allure Philippines* spoke with sports psychology specialist Lee Tajonera, who earned his certificate in sports psychology from the San Diego University for Integrative Studies and has worked with elite teams like the Far Eastern University men's basketball team and the Loyola Meralco Sparks. Also joining the conversation were Sam Catantan, the Philippines' fencing representative to the 2024 Paris Olympics, and Rhea Chan, who plays for the Filipinas national football team and the Manila Diggers club.

What they revealed is something we often forget: resilience and mental toughness aren't traits you're born with—they're forged. It's not about being unshakable. It's about learning how to recover, reframe, and rise again.

Tajonera believes that building resilience starts with embracing the struggle. He intentionally uses the word "embrace" rather than "accept." "The earlier you fully embrace the endless grind of training and preparation—regardless of the outcome—the earlier you progress toward developing resilience and mental toughness," he says.

And this isn't just advice for game day. It applies to the every day: the early mornings, the fatigue, the deadlines, the setbacks. It's in those small, often unseen moments that real strength is built—and that's something we can all apply to our lives.

HABITS OF THE MENTALLY STRONG

Both Catantan and Chan credit their mental clarity to habits that extend beyond physical training.

For Catantan, pressure is part of the game—and of life. Handling it, she says, is all about perspective. "If something doesn't go my way, it just means I need to work harder. And when things are going well, I remind myself to keep improving and to beat my last result," she shares. It's a mindset that works whether you're coming off a win or recovering from a loss.

Chan adds that for her, mental resilience is rooted in community. "Football is a team effort. We experience all the emotions that come with winning and losing as a collective. Knowing that I'm not alone in my emotions and that others may feel the same way provides me with a sense of relief," she says. "So when I'm facing setbacks, I remind myself I'm never alone. There are teammates, friends, and family members who see the best in me."

Even now in the corporate world, Dy finds that mindset and community remain essential. "When I was an athlete, my teammates and coach, and my friends and family—they were my support system," she says. "As long as I was in a good place with them, I was in a good mental state." Today, there's another layer that grounds her even more deeply: "At this point in my life, I feel more anchored in my relationship with God. It's what gets me through each day, no matter the pressure I face at work."

These emotional anchors—whether it's connection, faith, or perspective—are just as vital to performance as any workout. And they're accessible to all of us.

Tajonera recommends small but powerful practices that help train the mind the way we train our bodies: daily journaling, meditation, tracking emotional patterns, and being mindful of self-talk. "Mental habits can be like muscle memory," he explains. "You have to train yourself so that shifting mindsets in high-pressure moments becomes second nature."

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> “Because no matter the field you play on—court, office, classroom, or home—your mind is your most powerful teammate.”

MSTANDRET/ENVATO IMAGES

THE SILENT *epidemic*

Anorexia never stopped being prevalent. These days, it's simply hiding in plain sight. **BY ANYA GRANADOS**

The following article explores the realities of eating disorders and may include descriptions of disordered behaviors. It is intended to raise awareness and promote education. We advise caution for readers who may find this content triggering.

Anorexia often presents itself as a means of control—an illusion that, in the end, is as destructive as it is deceptive. "That's what makes it so dangerous," says Sab*, a 24-year-old model from Makati. "It starts with a high school bully picking at you, then your agent telling you to lose a few inches, but now, I starve because I starved yesterday. I did the same the day before that. It's just this compulsive cycle that's impossible to break." She speaks as though it's a matter of routine, but in reality, the pattern is one of unrelenting self-destruction. Modeling, with all its polished glamour, is in stark contrast to the girl sitting before me—shivering in a tweed jacket, her body frail, her lanugo-covered face etched with exhaustion.

For seven years, she's held her weight steady, a marker that no longer signifies health but rather a rigid, controlling obsession. To her 5,000 followers on X, her life is presented as a curated ideal. But what they don't see behind her posts is the terrifying truth of eating disorders—the perilous cycle of starvation that is far from the glamorous image she presents.

Every 52 minutes, someone loses their life to an eating disorder. This alarming statistic underscores the deadly nature of these conditions, which continue to grow unchecked, particularly in an era where societal pressures and the rise of social media have made anorexia, bulimia, and other disorders not just more visible, but tragically, more celebrated. Anorexia, the deadliest of eating disorders, is responsible for more deaths than any other mental illness. A 2020 review by *Current Opinion in Psychiatry* found that individuals hospitalized for anorexia are more than five times as likely to die earlier than their peers. The disorder's high mortality rate, which includes suicides, serves as a grim reminder that the pursuit of control over one's body can lead to irrevocable consequences.

To gain a deeper understanding of the risks, *Allure Philippines* reached out to leading experts in the field. Psychotherapist Fiona Yassin, the director of The Wave Clinic, a globally-recognized treatment facility for eating disorders, sheds light on the staggering reality of the condition. Alongside her is Pia Parker-Serviento, MD, an adolescent medicine specialist at the Makati Medical Center, who emphasizes the dangers of normalizing restrictive behaviors in younger populations.

WHEN SICKNESS GOES VIRAL

The body positivity movement of the 2010s made significant strides toward embracing diverse body types, but today, that progress seems to be rapidly regressing as the pro-skinny rhetoric of the 2000s resurfaces. On social media, many are now claiming that it's easier to starve yourself into a "skinny" ideal than to pay for expensive cosmetic procedures like a Kardashian-esque BBL.

But we seem to be forgetting that anorexia isn't a trend, it's a disease. As disturbing as it is, platforms like Instagram and X have fostered environments where anorexia and other eating disorders are glamorized. Posts like "you don't deserve to eat" or comments encouraging self-harm to deal with body image issues are seen as a form of "inspiration" for losing weight, where self-hate and harsh insults are not only accepted, but highly encouraged. "I would say that it is more pronounced with the rise of social media," Dr. Parker-

Serviento confirms. The relentless desire for thinness isn't just a societal pressure—it's become a curated, algorithm-driven mandate.

A lot of this has to do with the fact that "adolescents are now digital natives, and information is just one click away," says Dr. Parker-Serviento. "Eating disorders have always been there, and screening for it is part of our surveillance as pediatricians, especially among our teen patients. I don't think this is a 'new wave,' but perhaps it is [now] normalized. It seems to be propelled and promoted by social media in a way that advertises what an ideal body or weight should be."

The ideal of "skinny" has taken on a new form, morphed into an inescapable presence on digital platforms, where apps push forward content that glorifies weight loss. With social media regulations too loose to curb this harmful content, users—mostly young, impressionable women—are bombarded with messages that validate disordered eating habits, making it harder than ever to avoid the cultural fixation on unattainable beauty standards.

Yassin also weighs in: "Social media has made a huge difference, particularly visually," she says. "Platforms like Instagram, where young people follow others with millions of followers—many of whom advocate for pro-anorexia behaviors—are driving this issue." Yassin talks about the broader risks of sharing personal struggles online, particularly in online communities, where users share "before and after" photos, often unclothed. Beyond promoting harmful behaviors, posting sensitive photos and details exposes young people to serious vulnerabilities, making their safety a growing concern in the digital age.

In spite of anorexia's relentless grip on the internet, conversations about eating disorders remain rare, especially in a country like the Philippines. As of writing, there are only about a handful of local publications that have chosen to put out stories with the aim of addressing eating disorders.

"Anorexia isn't a trend, it's a disease—but most people seem to forget that."

SERGE FILIMONOV/STOCKSY

SILENTLY SUFFERING FROM AN EATING DISORDER

Anorexia often emerges as subtle, seemingly benign habits—skipping breakfast, cutting out carbs—that disguise themselves as wellness trends. Gradually, these routines slip into the background of daily life until they quietly spiral into something far more insidious. Dr. Parker-Serviento notes that it can be challenging for families to recognize when something is amiss, as people struggling with EDs may not overtly skip meals, but instead significantly reduce their caloric intake.

Social media has also had a hand in normalizing orthorexia, an eating disorder that involves a relentless fixation on "clean eating," destroying people's relationships with food under the pretense of health. A study conducted as recently as 2024 and published on *PLOS One* suggests that 64 percent of women are being exposed to "disordered eating" content including disordered versions of "What I Eat In A Day," on their TikTok "For You" page. After being shown content falling under these categories, study participants showed a decrease in body image satisfaction and an increase in degree of internalization of appearance ideals.

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just flow with it

Master your menstrual cycle to work with your body, not against it.

BY ANYA GRANADOS

SERGEY FILIMONOV/STOCKSY

It took my friend two hours to get ready for a date. I watched her tediously carry out her entire makeup routine, take out her overnight blowout rollers, and steam her dress into perfection. Yet at the end of it all, the only words to come out of her mouth were: "I look terrible." Bewildered, our entire friend group sputtered into a chorus of objections, only for us to be silenced by a shrill, "Yes, I do! I'm luteal!"

There's more to syncing with your menstrual cycle than simply managing cramps or mood swings—it can also extend to how we look, feel, and perceive our day-to-day interactions. For instance, my friend's exasperation about being "luteal" illustrates how deeply our hormonal rhythms affect us. The luteal phase, which occurs post-ovulation and pre-menstruation, is often characterized by physical and emotional changes, including bloating, fatigue, and irritability. A disaster cocktail for most women. But what if we could align our daily routines—be it beauty, fitness, or productivity—with the various phases of our menstrual cycle for our well-being? *Allure Philippines* explores this thought with experts Lyra Chua, OB-GYN, who heads The Medical City's women's health care center; and Margaret Limson, OB-REI, who practices in Makati Medical Center and also serves as a key resource for Medical Channel Asia.

YOUR FEEL-GOOD WEEKS: THE FOLLICULAR PHASE | DAYS 1 TO 13 IN A REGULAR 28-DAY CYCLE

The first phase of the menstrual cycle is called the follicular phase of the ovarian cycle—a time to get busy. Dr. Chua says, "This is when the ovaries produce estrogen, which is what repairs the denuded [AKA stripped] menstrual endometrium and regenerates it in preparation for ovulation. Emotionally, you would feel the most energized, sociable, clear-minded, and happy. It's a good time for taking exams or doing job interviews." Need to kill it at work? Try scheduling career-defining highlights when you're follicular (I would also personally schedule a first date around this time!).

Dr. Limson also adds that towards the end of this phase, around days 11 to 13, estrogen levels peak as a response to the stimulation of the ovaries by follicle-stimulating hormones, which are responsible for sexual development and reproduction. So, like we said, *it's a good time to get busy.* "An increase in serotonin and estrogen affects the mood and emotions, generally putting you in a positive and good mood, and increasing sexual desirability," she says. Seeing discharge this time of the month also isn't a cause for panic—it's just your body getting ready for ovulation.

YOUR SWEET SPOT: OVULATION | DAYS 14 AND 15 IN A REGULAR 28-DAY CYCLE

Ovulation occurs with the release of the egg (or ovum) from the mature follicle. This is when your body is most fertile. Turns out, it's also the best time for an OB-GYN appointment. "For those who really want to know if their ovaries are functioning well, they could have a transvaginal ultrasound (TVS) [around this time]," says Dr. Chua.

In this phase, an increase in sexual desire happens, which comes as a result of the biological effect of a change in estrogen and testosterone levels. Some women, however, experience a slight ovulatory pain, called *mittelschmerz* (middle pain), or ovulatory bleeding called *klein regel* (small rule). Though these are completely normal, more severe pain during ovulation may be due to a hemorrhage that you should get checked by your doctor ASAP.

Around this time, discharge also becomes more runny and egg white-like in texture, supporting sperm movement if you're trying to conceive. So if you're trying to get pregnant: track your ovulation dates.

YOUR BODY ON A HANGOVER: THE LUTEAL PHASE | DAY 15 UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF YOUR MENSTRUAL PHASE

After ovulation, the dominant follicle transforms into the corpus luteum, which begins to produce progesterone and estrogen. "The secretions at this time will nourish the fertilized egg (now called the zygote) as it enters the uterine cavity," Dr. Chua explains, highlighting how luteal discharge helps protect the zygote before it implants in the endometrium. Around this time, the cervix begins to produce a thick cervical mucus in preparation for pregnancy. In response to the progesterone, some women will begin to feel congestion of the breasts a week prior to the onset of menses. If you're constantly adjusting your bra straps around this time—this is why.

Dr. Limson further expounds on this, sharing that, "For most women, what is really notable during the second half of the cycle is that they may feel fatigued and bloated. Just right before menses, some women experience PMS symptoms, such as breast tenderness, headaches, water retention, fatigue, breakouts, and cramps due to the fall in hormones." A list of mood changes also include anxiety, depression, irritability, anger, sadness, crying spells, and emotional sensitivity. Ask yourself if suddenly crying over 2000s Shane West means you're just luteal. Maybe it's not you, maybe it's biology.

HOW YOU CAN GO WITH THE FLOW

Remember that no two menstrual cycles are the same, and they're bound to change as you get older. Dr. Limson explains that the hormones controlling the menstrual cycle vary from woman to woman, and these hormones also change as a woman ages. Particularly around menopause, hormone levels fluctuate, leading to different physical and mental effects.

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CYCLE SYNCING: IS PERIOD BLUETOOTH REAL?

The McClintock Effect, also known as menstrual synchrony, refers to "the tendency for the menstrual cycles of women living in close proximity to align over time," says Margaret Limson, OB-REI. In 1971, Martha McClintock's study on menstrual synchronization found that women who spend significant time together—such as friends, roommates, or family members—often began to experience their periods at the same time, despite having different cycle lengths initially. However, this phenomenon remains a subject of ongoing debate in the medical community, as various studies have produced conflicting results. Still, the idea of cycle synchronization keeps sparking interest, highlighting that more research is needed—especially since both doctors and patients are all about it.

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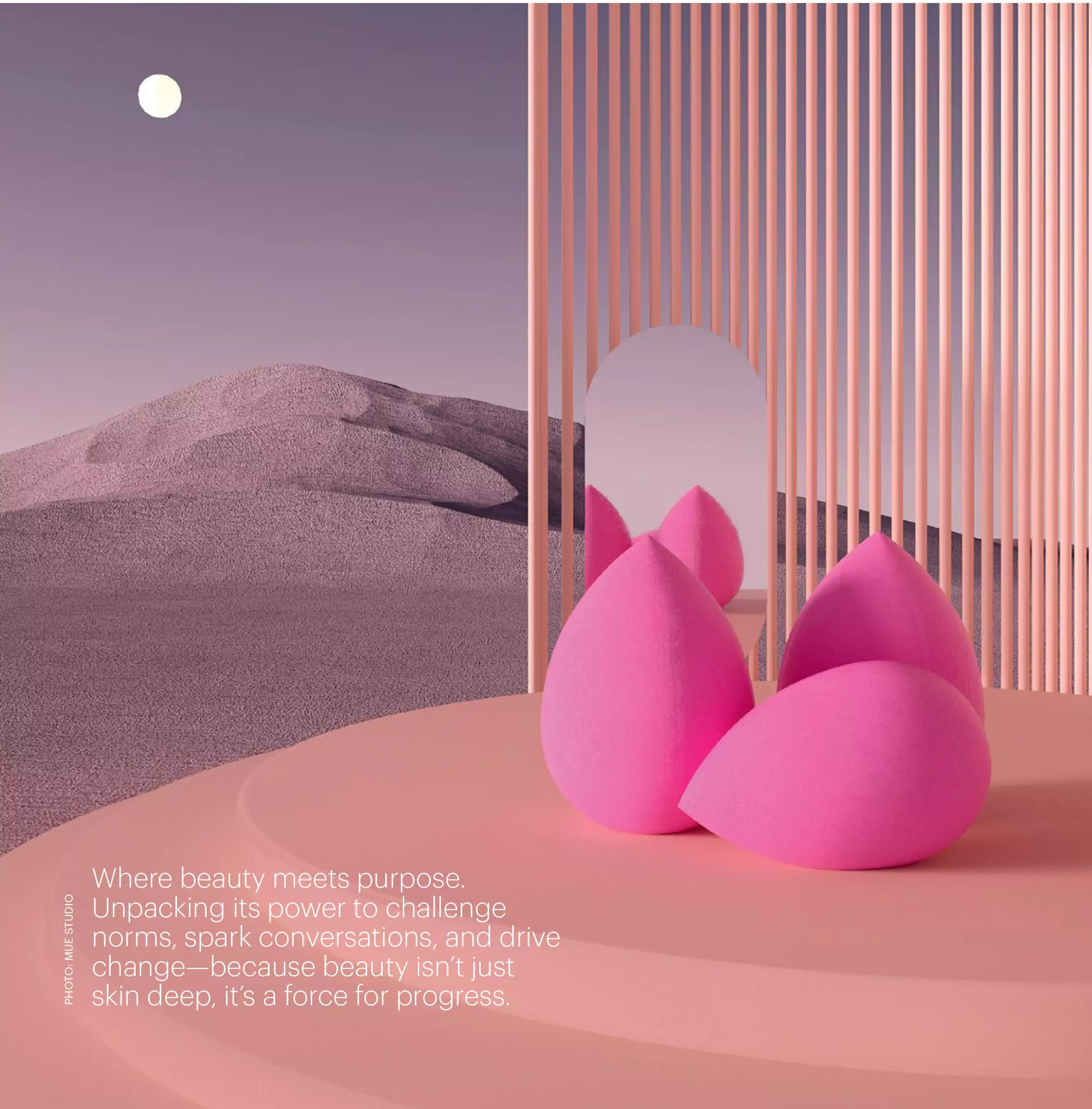

Where beauty meets purpose. Unpacking its power to challenge norms, spark conversations, and drive change—because beauty isn't just skin deep, it's a force for progress.

PHOTO: MUE STUDIO

WE ARE *family*

OLMA STUDIO/MUMSONFILM BARCELONA/STOCKSY

Four stories show how love, connection, and choice outweigh the traditional definition of family.

BY JILLIAN Q. GATCHECO-CANTADA

I'm 39, child-free, and married for 10 years; in contrast, most friends my age are on baby number two or three by now. When I see their social media posts, they're either attending their kids' graduations or vacationing in Tokyo Disneyland. Meanwhile, I just got my sixth ear piercing and impulse-bought two VIP tickets to J-Hope's concert in Singapore. Instead of "moving up" ceremonies, my milestones include treating my parents to trips abroad and making a major career shift after 15 years.

While it's true that this path I chose afforded me the luxuries of time and disposable income, it can be a little isolating sometimes. Since my peers are at a completely different life stage, I find myself constantly seeking the company of like-minded individuals, which I don't come across often, if at all. Being child-free when you're single is expected, but to be married and child-free when you are perfectly capable of bearing children? "Bakit?" "Sayang naman!" "May problema ba?" are the inevitable, even if unsolicited questions I get.

So when *Allure Philippines* asked me to find stories that redefine "family," I jumped at the chance. My lifestyle choice isn't the only one raising eyebrows and defying norms. The four accounts below are also challenging the definition of this basic unit of society—and reclaiming the narrative of what family means.

"ADOPTION IS A JOURNEY OF LOVE AND GROWTH FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED." - MARTHA

Quito was one year and 10 months old when he joined his adoptive family, Martha Herrera-Subido and Enrico Subido. The couple knew they wanted a child, and their decision to adopt fell in place after exhausting all possible ways to conceive naturally—including a couple of failed IVF attempts, non-medical solutions, and even faith-based ones. "We were on the same page all throughout. We went through extreme highs—getting married, traveling, celebrating each other's personal wins, and extreme lows—like the disappointment of not being able to conceive naturally. We've been through a lot together, and what we've developed is an open way of communicating with one another. The decision to adopt was pretty automatic because it's something we came to as a unit," says Subido.

Herrera-Subido shares, "A pivotal moment was attending a pre-adoption seminar conducted by Generations Home, a child placement agency. It opened our eyes to the severity of the orphan crisis in the Philippines. We realized that families are the answer to the orphan crisis and that we are in the position to respond to the call."

Generations Home, a private nonprofit founded in 2018, is currently serving 100 families who are in different stages of their adoption journey—with hundreds more on the waitlist. As expected, the adoption journey is no easy feat. Its completion from pre-adoption paperwork and eligibility assessment to home visits and matching is at least the length of a pregnancy.

For Subido and his wife, it took roughly a year before Quito officially joined their family. It started with two pre-adoption seminars, one by the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD), and the other by Generations Home. But that was just the first step. Jasmine Buen, director of partnerships at Generations Home shares, "Those who have gone through the process describe it as 'the hardest job application [they've] gone through'—and rightfully so—because it's a lifelong job. You cannot resign from this."

"The reality behind adoption, although it is a beautiful thing, is that it comes from a place of brokenness," says Buen. "There was a child not taken care of by [their] supposed family." This truth has often been mishandled by Philippine media via teleseryes or news reports where adoptive children are portrayed as rebellious, out to get the family inheritance, or worse—ordered around as help. "These are just the horror stories highlighted by the media," says Buen. "There might be some outliers where that does happen, but that's not the whole truth of adoption. By design, adoption was designed to respond to vulnerable children. We're trying hard to highlight the positive stories—not sugarcoating it, of course, but [showing] the redemptive side of [it]."

Due to this stigma already associated with adoption, deep empathy and care are required of adoptive parents when handling conversations with their child or close circle. "The terms 'real' or 'natural' parent, or 'real child' or 'adopted child,' can be hurtful. Quito is our son and we love him deeply," explains Herrera-Subido. "I think the biggest misconception is that adoptive parents are expected to keep the adoption a secret. Or that being adopted is something to be ashamed of. We believe in open communication about adoption. We plan on doing adoption-telling with Quito as early as possible." Subido adds, "We also told everyone that, moving forward, Quito's adoption story would not be kept from him. This is for complete transparency and an effort to establish that there's no need to step on eggshells when discussing this topic."

Herrera-Subido opens up that they understand Quito will have questions about his biological origins later on, and they will support his search for identity. Until then? "Quito's story is his to tell when the time is right," she says.

"WHAT TRULY MATTERS IS THE QUALITY OF THE PARENTING, NOT THE GENDER OF THE PARENTS." – HANNA

Hanna Cometa had just gotten out of a five-year marriage upon meeting Ami, who was visiting the Philippines at the time. "My previous marriage was actually sort of a 'need' to be married, to 'conform to what is normal.' All my siblings were already married and I was the eldest of the girls. I think my parents knew I was lesbian, as I was not open yet, and they were trying to shield me from what others would say."

Hanna and Ami formed an instant connection and eventually moved overseas. "As my common-law partner, Ami sponsored me and the two boys, and we migrated to Canada in 2005. I believe that was when we truly began to build our own family."

Hanna's biological sons Carlo and Arnee were very young when the relationship with Ami started, so there were no explanations needed for the boys. "We never even denied to them the fact that they have a father. But unfortunately, the father didn't make an effort to create a relationship with them until he passed away," says Hanna.

There were moments, especially in grade school, when Carlo and Arnee would question the absence of a father. "Over time, though, they seemed to come to terms with the fact that their family was different," says Hanna. "I'll never forget the time one of their classmates tried to bully our son about not having a dad, and he confidently replied, 'It's all good—I have two moms!'"

If Hanna is "mom," Ami is "mommy Ami," whom their sons, now adults, have a deep love and respect for. "At times, I even feel like they share a closer bond with her than with me!" says Hanna. "The love and respect they show her are unique—it feels like a profound, grateful kind of love, acknowledging all that she has done for them in raising them, even though they weren't her biological children. I say this because, since they are grown-ups now, I sometimes hear comments like, 'Thank you for everything!'"

Hanna sheds light on the gender bias that same-sex couples encounter: "Lesbian couples face doubts about providing 'male role models,' while gay male couples are questioned about their ability to nurture. These assumptions stem from outdated stereotypes about gender roles," Hanna says. "One of the biggest assumptions we both faced was that, as two women, we wouldn't be capable of building a family or raising our two boys. While these assumptions did affect us, they also became a powerful source of motivation to prove otherwise." Hanna explains that in many ways, the fundamentals of parenting are the same regardless of the parents' genders; love, support, and providing a safe environment are universal goals.

Hanna and Ami raised their sons in British Columbia, with a small population where everyone knows each other. "Over time, we became aware of who accepted us and who didn't. Despite this, we always did our best to ensure the boys could participate in all the activities they enjoyed. We faced challenges but overcame them, believing that while our family might be 'unique,' we're just like any other parents—focused on raising happy, healthy children."

"IT REALLY TAKES COURAGE TO STAND AND BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SOMEONE'S RESPONSIBILITY." – JAZMINE*

Jazmine Mondragon*, 37, is the adoptive parent of a five year old whose biological mother was in a complicated situation: married and pregnant with someone else's child. The region sales head, who knew the mom, stood as the parent even before the child was born: "I took the responsibility and the rest is history." Mondragon had always known she would adopt. It was part of her plan to have a stable life and career, a husband, and a child in her 30s. "It happened, although without a husband. It was a dream come true, given that I am gay," she says.

As the family's breadwinner, Mondragon admits it was challenging to add a child to her list of responsibilities, which include caring for her mom who suffered a stroke and financing her siblings' education. "To have an additional responsibility is very hard for me, but I took it, because I know he needs me," she says. At the time she became a mother, Mondragon was still finishing her undergraduate degree: "Imagine, I took care of a baby while in college. It was so difficult. But I told myself that I would carry on, for my son—and I did. I finished my studies. He was also an inspiration to me because I want him to be proud of me. How can I encourage him to finish school if I didn't?"

Her favorite answer when asked why she adopted? "He's God's gift. He made my life more meaningful and gave me more courage to live." Mondragon also credits her support system of family and friends for helping raise her son. "It's not about me or my life anymore—it's about a child's life that needs love in the absence of his biological parents. He needs a family who will love him unconditionally with no labels."

This unconditional love means knowing that someday her son may want to find out more about his biological parents. "I am so ready to share his story with him when he asks. I won't hide it. It's also his choice if he chooses to leave my life someday—I don't want to stop him," says Mondragon. "At least, I gave him the life he deserves. I also want him to be able to feel complete, and if that means finding out more about his origins, I will support it."

She does share one question her five year old asks frequently: "Mama, did I come from your tummy?" Mondragon's answer is unwavering: "No, you came from my heart."

"I DIDN'T CHOOSE TO BE CHILD-FREE TO BE THE QUEEN OF THE CORPORATE JUNGLE. I CHOSE IT BECAUSE IT ALLOWS ME TO HAVE THE MOST WELL-ROUNDED AND ABUNDANT LIFE." - BEV

Bev Almazan-Siongco, 39, is part of what this generation calls "DINKs," which stands for "Double Income, No Kids." The label is making the rounds on social media, but the term, although often used by millennials and Gen Z, was used as far back as the 1980s in the U.S., according to the *TIME Magazine*

KEGFIRE/ENVATO

> "A child needs a family who will love them unconditionally with no labels."

article, *Here Come The DINKs*.

"What separates DINKs from most other Americans is a much greater percentage of discretionary income," writes the *TIME* author. And along with DINK-dom comes the big "DINK Dilemma"—to procreate or not to procreate?

"More people are embracing self-awareness and questioning societal expectations," says certified executive coach, speaker, host, podcaster, and content creator Myrza Sison, who knew she wanted to be child-free at age 21 in the late 80s. "Instead of simply following what's traditionally expected, Gen Zs and millennials are now braver and more adamant about pushing for what they really want out of life."

Almazan-Siongco did give motherhood thoughtful consideration when she got married. "My husband and I talked openly about it. While I had a strong point of view, my husband was more 'go with the flow.' For the longest time, he could imagine both realities and he would be equally happy about them. We got married in February 2020; the world shut down in March 2020 because of the pandemic. Our honeymoon stage was marked by forced lockdown, which was an easy recipe for disaster for a lot of couples. The forced lockdown was a litmus test of a couple's foundational values and I was proud to say that our relationship flourished. It was the last week of the year in 2021, between Christmas and New Year, when my husband told me: 'The two of us—we're a complete family. And I also choose you, I choose you every day. What makes you happy will make me happy.' We confirmed we have the same life pursuit: abundance and freedom."

This freedom comes in many forms for the couple: disposable income, time, career, and mobility. "The best thing about being child-free is the freedom to create the life that I want. I will choose what I want to do, when I want to do it and until when, how I want to do it, and how much resources I want to invest in it," Almazan-Siongco says.

According to Pew Research Center, 44 percent of non-parents aged 18 to 49 in 2021 said it's "not too" or "not at all likely" that they will have children someday—an increase of 7 percent who said the same in 2018. Furthermore, in 2023, Pew reported that 42 percent of adults say having children is "not too" or "not at all important." Despite the gradual shift in mindset, a lot of judgment is still thrown at couples who decide to take this child-free path, with women often on the receiving end more than men.

Almazan-Siongco shares, "The judgment that a child-free reality is a lonely path to take stems from the fact that people believe that bearing a child is the biggest value you can contribute to this world—and that couldn't be farther from the truth. A lot of people define their happiness or fulfillment in the context of the value they bring to others or the world. While that is noble, one must not forget that we should first and foremost, define happiness and fulfillment in the context of reaching our highest selves."

Sison echoes this sentiment and says social media and open conversations have helped normalize the importance of living life on your own terms, and of finding fulfillment that doesn't necessarily come from parenthood. "It is no longer the end-all-be-all of life's purpose. Factors like overpopulation, climate change, and the cost of raising children are also making people rethink the default expectation of parenthood," she says.

When asked to share her biggest realization about being child-free, Sison answers, "That I made the right decision! My life and marriage have been incredibly fun, fulfilling, and free. A child-free life can be as exciting, joyful, and purposeful as you want it to be. You get to create a life that aligns with your deepest desires—whether that's traveling the world, pursuing a passion or career wholeheartedly, or simply having the freedom to wake up every day and decide what you want to do and what makes you happy. It's also essential to have clarity about what you want and why. When you're firm in your choice, the opinions of others won't faze you. People often project their fears or regrets onto you, but their perspective doesn't have to define your reality. Trust yourself—you know what's best for your life."

Almazan-Siongco knows that the burden of non-acceptance is to be expected and only time will tell. "Child-free couples need to show up in our advanced age, glowing with the benefits of an abundant and well-rounded life.

"Until then, let's write the blueprint," she says.

*Name has been changed.

Fairness or *Fairest?*

How lookism impacts our workplace success

BY LYNN PINUGU

It was a scene straight out of *The Devil Wears Prada*. In 2000, Michelle Barretto, then in her early 20s, eagerly walked into a job interview with a renowned female designer. Though she was just a fresh graduate, she was precocious and passionate about design, and felt confident about her qualifications for the assistant role. But Barretto didn't even make it past the first glance. "Absolutely not," the Filipino-American designer declared before Barretto could say a word, turning to her receptionist to question how Barretto was recommended in the first place. "I was very thin and a bit awkward-looking because of my braces, so maybe I didn't have the 'right' look for the job," Barretto says. "Looking back, I'm also surprised I didn't allow that incident to discourage me. I remember telling myself that she missed out, because she didn't get to see how smart and competent I am."

Twenty five years after that formative moment, Barretto is now the CEO of Vitamin B—a brand consultancy firm that caters to the country's top conglomerates. Working in an industry that emphasizes visuals and perception has given her unique insight into how physical appearance can shape both personal and professional success. "When a person is perceived as conventionally beautiful, so many doors open effortlessly for them," she explains. One example she shared is how branding a company becomes easier when its CEO is considered attractive since their appearance casts a "halo effect" that enhances its overall image. "You realize how much weight is still placed on appearance, even when your work speaks for itself," she says.

BEAUTY BIAS AT WORK

Lookism refers to discrimination based on one's physical appearance. According to Liezel Matias, a human resources practitioner with over two decades of experience and a

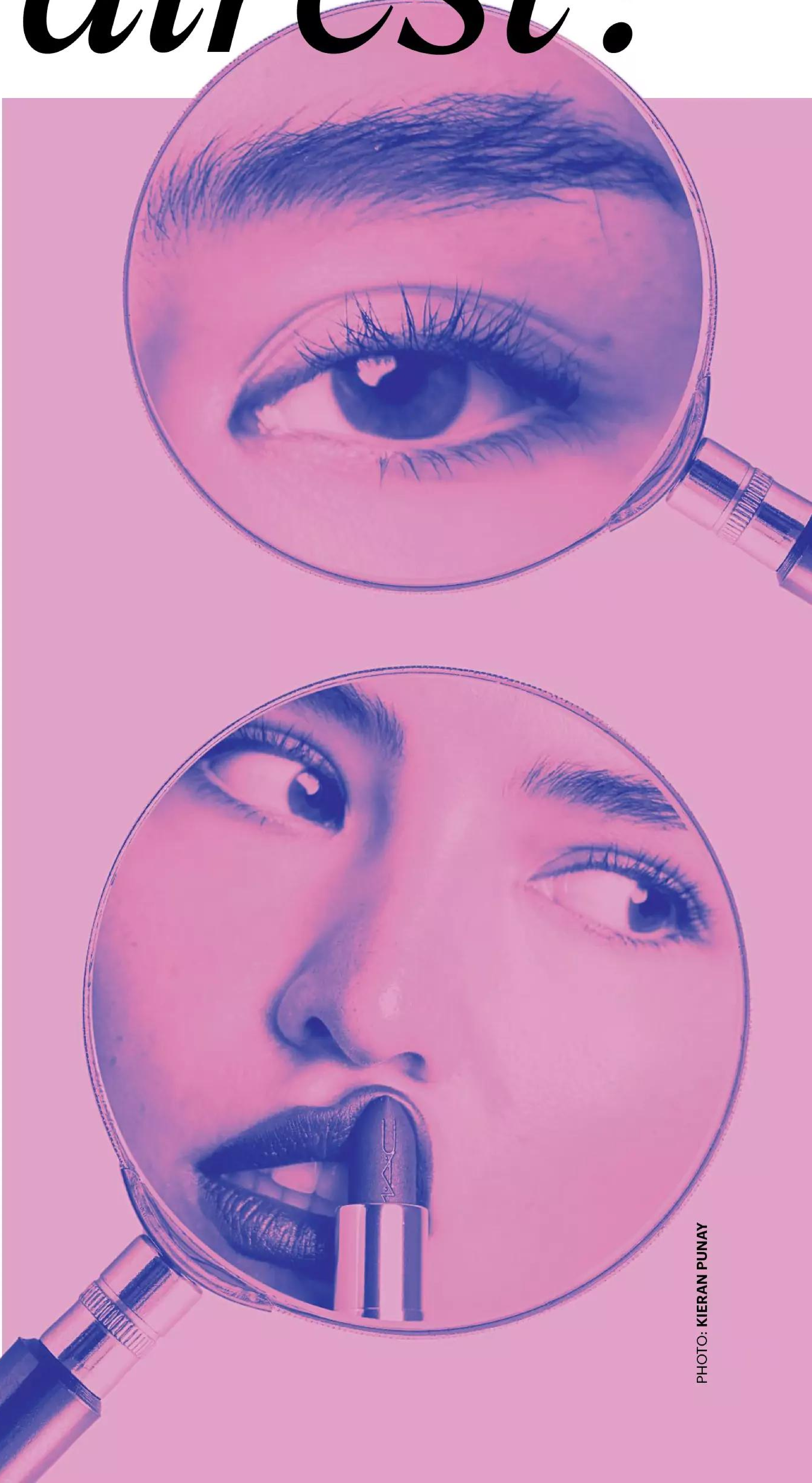

PHOTO: KIERAN PUNAY

specialization in sociology, people tend to perceive good-looking individuals as healthier, more intelligent, and more sociable. "Society has conditioned us to associate beautiful people as somewhat superior, not just in looks but also in competence," she says. As Barretto's story illustrates, lookism often seeps into the workplace, where an employer's perception of one's looks can skew judgments about one's proficiency and potential. This ingrained bias can influence hiring decisions, performance evaluations, and career advancement opportunities. A 2020 study by the University of Memphis in Tennessee discovered that even in academic institutions—places where brains should always outweigh beauty—students tend to evaluate better-looking female teachers as more effective educators.

Gerri Dela Cruz, a psychology graduate with 13 years of human resources experience spanning both the corporate sector and academia, acknowledges that some emphasis on looks at the workplace should be expected. She highlights that a person who comes to work with a well-groomed appearance—like clean nails, tidy hair, and well-ironed clothes—exudes professionalism. However, Dela Cruz notes that lookism becomes quite pronounced in jobs related to sales, marketing, and other client-facing roles. "Companies often try to leverage society's bias toward attractive people, believing it could mean higher sales or better client relationships," she says.

This becomes problematic when an organization creates a culture that intentionally and proudly promotes a looks-based culture. "I know of an organization that only tends to hire women of a certain height and body type because the department head treats them as 'office decorations.' The male supervisor knows he has built a reputation of having only beautiful women in his team, which gets him invited to parties and other social events," Dela Cruz says.

Lookism, though it affects all genders, is most acutely felt by women, with weight being one of the most pervasive determinants of professional advancement. Various research, including an oft-cited 2005 study by American sociologists Dalton Conley and Rebecca Glauber, indicate that a slim body can give people a career advantage that's comparable to the boost a college education provides in terms of job offers and earning potential. In contrast, heavier individuals often face negative stereotypes, including assumptions that they lack mobility, self-control, and motivation. "When a job applicant is overweight, one of the biases that arise is whether this person has a series of health problems or mobility issues that could prevent them from doing the job well," Matias says. This bias is further compounded by a misconception that weight gain is solely a consequence of poor dietary choices and inadequate exercise, and that a person should be blamed for their inability to keep the weight down. Framing it as a personal failure gives this harmful narrative a veneer of legitimacy, making it harder to confront and dismantle.

Matias believes that companies should acknowledge that biases like lookism exist, rather than ignore them, and that leaders should set the tone for inclusivity and fairness. "Leaders have the power to influence organizational culture by establishing proper hiring guidelines, promotion policies, and training programs to ensure individuals are valued for their abilities and character, rather than superficial traits," she says. Similarly, Dela Cruz combats her own biases by always aligning her hiring decisions with her organization's core values, mission, and vision. "This approach encourages a deeper effort to understand a candidate's character and potential, rather than being overly influenced by the 'first impression advantage' that often favors more attractive individuals," she says.

RISING ABOVE WORKPLACE LOOKISM

For young women who are still developing their sense of self, encountering looks-based discrimination in the workplace can be particularly jarring. Such experiences can challenge your confidence in your abilities and undermine your self-worth. I was only 23 years old when I co-founded a non-profit organization, requiring me to take on a senior leadership role at a very young age. As a young leader tasked with navigating fundraising and high-level partnership meetings—spaces that are often dominated by men—I found myself receiving unsolicited comments about my looks. The constant scrutiny of my physical appearance helped fuel a persistent imposter syndrome, making me question whether I genuinely deserved my leadership position and the opportunities I was getting.

As I gained more experience and confidence over time, I realized that these comments were not a reflection of my competence, but an unfortunate symptom of how lookism and society's disproportionate emphasis on women's looks can distort our self-esteem. One of the things I focus on now when mentoring young women is identifying and rising above harmful narratives about their worth and competence, and replacing self-doubt with self-assurance.

BREAKING THE BEAUTY BARRIER

For women who feel disadvantaged because they do not have the beauty premium, developing one's soft skills can serve as a powerful equalizer and counter to lookism. According to a 2024 LinkedIn study, organization, teamwork, problem-solving, and communication skills were each linked to an 11 percent acceleration in a person's career growth, while leadership skills led to a 10 percent boost. Barretto strongly echoes this: "Physical beauty is relative. Lookism exists, but it will only take you so far. In the long run, your expertise, the way you articulate your ideas, and how well you relate to different kinds of people—that holds much more weight."

While lookism may give some people a head start, the depth and breadth of one's contributions will ultimately define a person's trajectory. "In branding, we always talk about identity differentiation," Barretto says. "Even if society tries to judge you on one aspect, transcend that by showing how multi-faceted you are. That makes a person unique and even more attractive. You have to know your value, and you have to bring it to the table."

BEAUTY does *good*

A blueprint for brands going global, Dermtropics elevates the best of local sustainable practices.

BY LIA CRUZ

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In the beauty industry, where the bottom line matters, labels such as "sustainable," "local," and "organic" can give products and brands a boost. It's easy to lay claim to words and be lauded for it. But to actually back up the talk? That's another story.

Dermtropics launched in 2023, offering certified hypoallergenic, dermatologist-tested, paraben-free, sulfate-free, and fragrance-free products that are clinically tested to boost moisture and be safe for sensitive skin. These come from USDA-certified organic coconuts harvested from the rich, volcanic soil of South Cotabato and Davao, purchased at certified fair-trade prices, and then wet-milled without any heat, pressing or chemicals, keeping the extracted virgin coconut oil in its purest state. Their bottles are made of 40 percent upcycled wheat, which degrade outdoors in 17 to 22 months.

It's a long list of credentials. But Dermtropics has done the legwork, obtaining the certificates needed to legitimately use the words "organic" and "fair trade," and paying for the third-party testing required to put "clinically tested" on their packaging to ensure that they are true to their claims. In a world where labels can both enlighten and deceive, this is significant.

It's not the easiest path. But for Margaux Arambulo-Lucena, who co-founded the brand with her husband Miko, there was never any other alternative.

"We wanted to create a brand that we can be proud of, making our products mindfully and without harsh ingredients, and helping address real pain points," she says. "We also want to prove that sustainability can go hand in hand with good quality."

Arambulo-Lucena hails from a family of doctors, and suffers from psoriasis. Her dermatologist mother was always particular about products: no harsh ingredients and fragrances. Her husband, on the other hand, suffers from skin asthma. Their skin issues, combined with the family background in dermatology and prior experience in farming in Mindanao, led to a brand championing virgin coconut oil (VCO). "We've been using [VCO] since we were small," Arambulo-Lucero shares. "My mom has been prescribing it to her patients for 30 years. Clinical studies prove it can help those with eczema and allergies. It has lots of antioxidants, fatty acids and anti-bacterial and anti-inflammatory properties."

> "We want to prove that sustainability can go hand in hand with good quality."

It's been tedious, for sure. But Arambulo-Lucena is gunning for more. "More than just growing a brand, I hope Dermtropics can make a meaningful impact—on skin health, local communities, and the planet."

Perhaps that can go on the label.

PHOTO: KIERAN PUNAY

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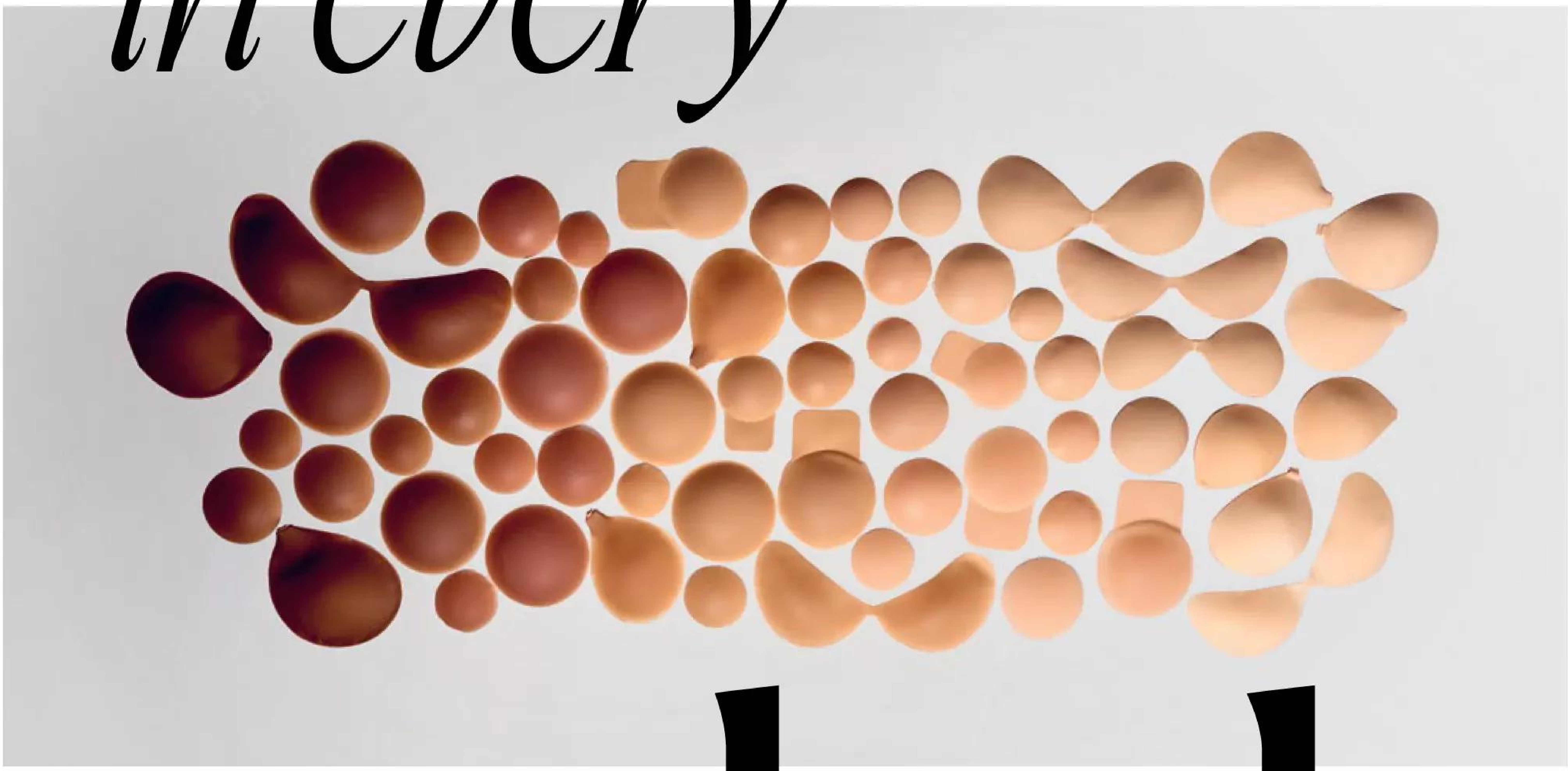

Hiraya Pilipina offers nipple pasties and silicone bras in a wide range of shades and sizes just for the Filipina. **BY LIA CRUZ**

Ever put on a pair of nipple pasties under your top, thinking it would disappear into your skin, but the exact opposite comes to pass? The effect of your sheer top strays from discreet into slightly risqué, what with the two flashing lights stealing the show.

Not what you were going for? We get it. So did Cleo Loque.

In 2021, a then-17-year-old Loque purchased a pair of 30-peso nipple pasties online, and immediately disliked, first, how dusty they seemed, and, second, how they would bulge out in the wrong places. Loque, then already an entrepreneur with her brand Hiraya Pilipina, thought to herself, "I can innovate this."

Four years later, Hiraya Pilipina now offers both adhesive and non-adhesive nipple pasties in an inclusive range for the Filipina with six shades and four sizes (from six-and-a-half to 13 centimeters), plus silicone bras in three iterations (Bosom Cake, their bestseller; Plexi-Wings, a seamless V-shape; and Soft Cloud, a cloth adhesive). Early on, Loque zeroed in on the problem of the lack of sizes for bigger-chested Filipinas, and sought to remedy it. "We created a new mold for it, really investing in it even if it was more expensive. We wanted the pasties to be very seamless and opaque," she says.

Their products are available online, through their website, and on shopping platforms Lazada, Shopee, and TikTok. A swipe through the apps reveals comments like "It's like magic! Hiraya Pilipina did it again!" and "Isa na ako sa mga suki ng Hiraya Pilipina! Sobrang worth it ang pera sa mga products niyo." ("Your products are so worth it.")

Loque didn't expect the response to their pasties, but she can understand it. "Kapag nagsusuot tayo ng damit, it starts with our innerwear. When we feel confident with our innerwear, it's an extra boost before you even wear your outfit," Loque shares.

It's a story in itself that Loque was only 15 when she started Hiraya Pilipina in 2019 as a passion project to promote female- and self-empowerment. She loaned PHP 20,000 from her parents and started selling T-shirts with what she calls, "cheesy slogans, like 'I turn pain into something beautiful,' and 'I will prove myself right.'" Even as a child, she was always entrepreneurial—selling ice candy and setting up sari-sari stores during the summer. Now, at 21, she manages a team of 30 as she finishes her bachelor's degree in entrepreneurship in Enderun Colleges, dealing with the daily nitty gritty of running a business, consulting with parents and professors, and turning to books and podcasts for help.

For Loque, Hiraya Pilipina is all about empowerment and community—yes, in terms of creating inclusive products for women and marketing, but also in terms of the culture of the company that is mostly female. "I try to develop a culture wherein we pull each other up instead of down, and in our community with our customers as well," Loque shares, emphasizing how working from the inside out gives the brand strength. Sounds like what a solid pair of pasties is meant to do, too.

PHOTO: **KARLO CADANG**

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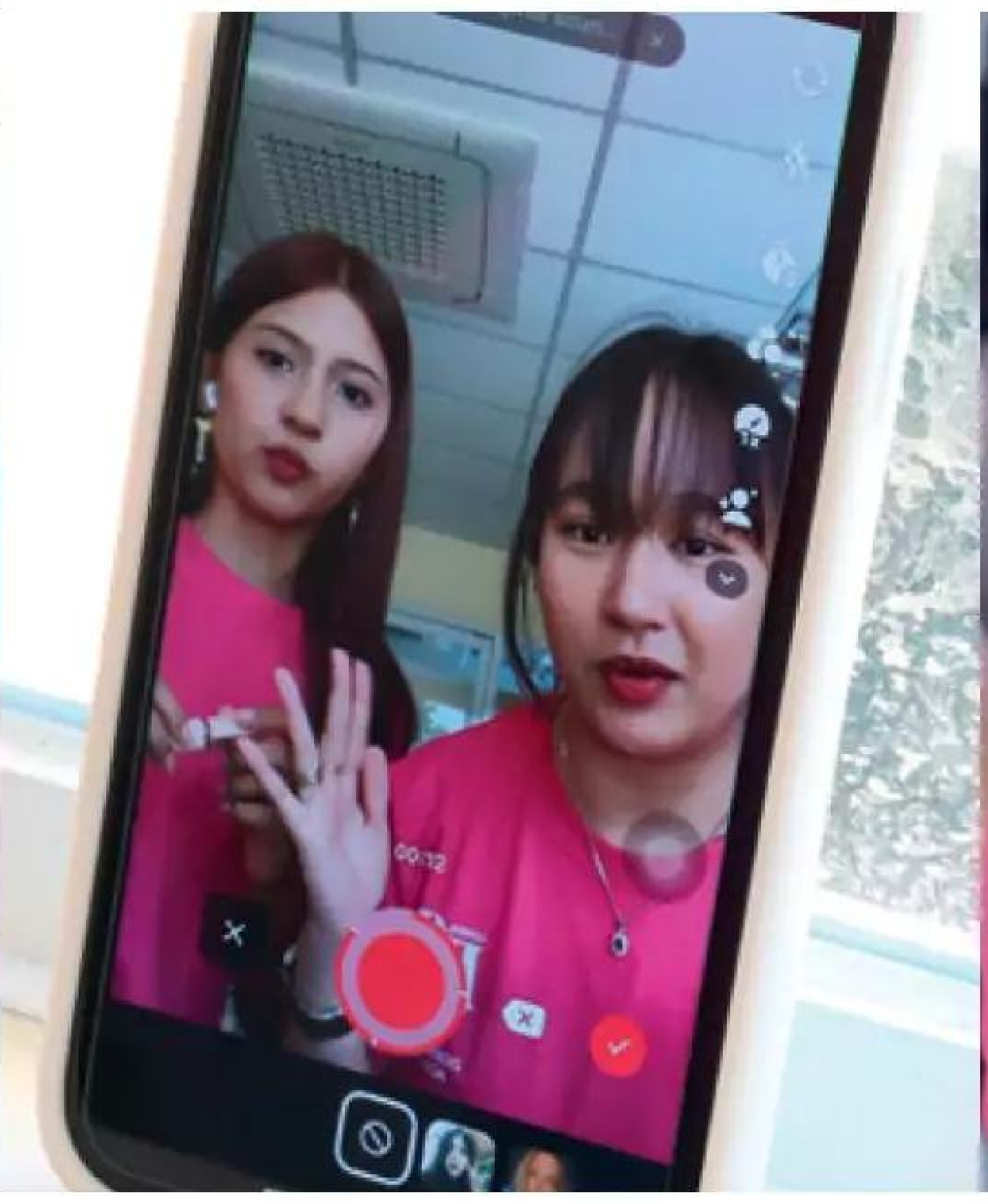
more than a MAKE*OVER*

A trailblazing program gives women the tools—and confidence—to rebuild their lives in the digital age. **BY LIA CRUZ**



It was watching her children shake and cower in fear during fights that finally made Mary Jane Ibo decide to leave her abusive partner. "Hindi ko akalain na magkakaroon ako ng broken family, pero ito po yung nangyari," she says. ("I didn't think I would have a broken family, but that's what happened.") With her three young boys in tow, Ibo packed up and left.

But in a tale as old as time, much like many other women in the same position, Ibo struggled to support her children. Eventually, she had to surrender her children into the care of their relatives. Many women are in situations similar to Ibo's—at a crossroads, wondering how to make ends meet, or what to make of themselves.

For Lordelyn Guimpatan, becoming a young mother put a question mark on her own hopes and dreams. The needs of her family came first. "Iniisip ko, may karapatan ba akong ituloy ang aking pangarap?" she says. "O dapat ko bang i-prioritize ang pangangailangan ng aking pamilya?" ("Should I prioritize my dreams or my family's needs?")

Princess Caballero, on the other hand, previously spent hours each day toiling in a restaurant as a service crew member. Making ends meet, however, was difficult, and her job was still not enough to provide for the needs of her children.

It was through the local governments of Quezon City and Makati that Ibo, Guimpatan, and Caballero learned about the Digital Beauty Academy (DBA), a program developed by L'Oréal. In partnership with local government units, the non-profit organization Spark Philippines, and social media juggernaut TikTok, the DBA makes its mission both practical and far-reaching. Participants are taught the basics of beauty—skin care, hair care, and makeup—and are upskilled with training in social media entrepreneurship, such as digital content creation and e-commerce. Launched in 2023, the program has already reached over 1,400 participants and continues to grow as it empowers more women across Metro Manila.

The heart of the program is wielding beauty as a catalyst for change. As one of its key supporters, L'Oréal's managing director Yassine Bakkari sees digital training as an essential part of the transformation: "Whatever their social class, Filipinos are very connected and sophisticated when it comes to media consumption. Beauty consumers not only look for products online, they also look for quality content and reviews."

Maika Teves, executive director of Spark Philippines, adds to the fact that the pandemic shifted so many interactions and transactions online. "By mastering both beauty techniques and digital skills, graduates gain confidence in their abilities," she shares, highlighting that the program has birthed a network where graduates are able to seek mentorships, collaborations, and further career opportunities.

To supplement the family income and to make some of her own dreams come true, Guimpatan has already begun exploring a career in content creation. Caballero found steady work in a salon, where she says, "Nabibigay ko na ang mga pangangailangan ng mga anak ko." ("I am able to provide for my children's needs.") "Na-boost ang confidence ko, at higit sa lahat, nakakapagpaganda ako ng ibang tao."

As for Ibo, if you check the TikTok account @mjorcineibo, you'll find a video of her applying makeup and talking about the power of lipstick—its psychological effect on women, which uplifts and motivates them to go out and achieve their goals and dreams. The short video showcases her makeup application prowess, and with her modulated voice over, plays like an informative micro-documentary.

"Nabalik yung confidence ko sa sarili ko," Ibo says, when asked how her life changed after the program. She is now a flourishing content creator, creating videos to empower women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. She's gone back to school, studying entrepreneurship at Quezon City University. While her journey is still unfolding, her days now look different—filled with purpose, possibility, and progress. Such is the power of beauty.

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COURTESY OF SUBJECT

MEET THE EXPERT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 40

Then I curate the active ingredients that I want to include. I only look for active ingredients that are clinically proven and also cost-effective. We're always keeping in mind that by keeping the formula cost down, we can pass those savings on to our customers. Once the formula is close to approval, we conduct preliminary quality testing. We also work with external labs to conduct in-vivo clinical testing. We conduct clinical testing of the final formulation so we understand how effective our formulas are once all is said and done. Clinical testing can be costly, but we know it's worth it when we've created something that delivers. It's what keeps our people coming back and builds trust with our community.

What are the biggest formulation mistakes you've seen in the beauty industry due to a lack of scientific expertise?
People become overly-focused on including active ingredients in their formulations that don't chemically make sense. A great example of this are products that contain acid exfoliants. I've seen products claiming to contain alpha hydroxy acids. These acids work to encourage cell turnover by helping to break down the bonds of dead skin cells, so new ones can emerge. In order for this to work, the optimal pH is usually around four or so. But when I take the pH of the product, it's higher—around six to seven. That means that the acid is somewhat neutralized and not as effective.

Another formulation mistake I see is more about formula protection. I see a lot of products containing expensive active ingredients like stabilized vitamin C derivatives or retinoids being delivered in open-air containers like dropper bottles, clear glass, or jars. But these ingredients can be susceptible to degradation when exposed to oxygen and light. A product that originally had two percent of a vitamin C derivative then actually ends up having less than one percent after degrading.

What's a skin care myth you wish more people understood from a scientific perspective?
That skin care works overnight! It takes dedication and a routine. If you see a product saying that it will reduce wrinkles or change your skin composition in 30 seconds or overnight, that's not possible. Skin cells have a natural life cycle. It usually takes at least 28 days for old skin cells to die and for new ones to replace them. Age slows down this turnover. This emergence of new skin cells is the time when you see the benefits and changes that can occur with your skin.

Photographer: Tone Woolfe. Makeup: Nina Soriano. Hair: Chansophalla Nop. Styling: Rap Sarmiento.

RAISING A NEW STANDARD

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 113

Finally, Tomo urges parents to become more involved in what children consume in the media. "Provide your children with resources that reflect morena representation," she stresses. For younger children, she suggests movies with leads like *Moana*, *Pocahontas*, and *Aladdin's* Princess Jasmine—characters with brown skin who are strong and empowered. Locally, she recommends *My Name Is Morena*, a children's book by Ayn Bernos that affirms brown-skinned beauty, and Ben & Ben's song *Kayumanggi*, which celebrates Filipino identity and skin tone. These tools, she says, can help children see themselves positively reflected in the media they consume. "Also, be conscious of how you express your thoughts, especially since we were raised and parented [in environments] where colorism was more prevalent," Tomo adds.

Looking to the future, Fortun-Zulueta shares, "Honestly, I think my daughter will have it easier growing up morena than my generation did. I would never shame her or make her feel like her natural skin color is unacceptable. I will teach her how to take care of it every day, but not how to make her look different from what she looks like."

I hope the youth of today realize this and learn to bask in the beauty of their skin color—morena or not. There's so much beauty in diversity, and I'd love to raise a child in a world where I wouldn't need to worry about them being called names or feeling pressured to change because of others' opinions. We should all be so lucky to feel beautiful and empowered our way. I sure wouldn't want my future child to feel "less than" just because she has more melanin than others.

There's still a long way to go, but mainstream consciousness seems to be shifting, at the very least. Tomo ends with an "unpopular" opinion that I wholeheartedly agree with, saying, "I just wish we could stop emphasizing [that being proud to be morena] is counterculture—because it shouldn't feel like resistance," Tomo says. "When our beauty is no longer the exception but simply the norm, that's when I'll know we've truly made it."

JUST FLOW WITH IT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 167

Dr. Chua expounds on this, noting that menstrual intervals may shorten, flow may become heavier and last longer, and symptoms may either intensify or completely disappear. "In some cases, abnormalities in the menstrual cycle could signal structural issues such as myoma, adenomyosis, endometriosis, polyps, ovarian tumors, or cervical problems," she says. "These issues should be addressed promptly and not ignored."

Both doctors underscore the importance of maintaining a healthy

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lifestyle for proper cycle maintenance. Dr. Chua recommends the usual eight hours of sleep every night, healthy eating, and incorporating daily physical activity. “Foods should generally be plant-based,” she recommends, avoiding the consumption of processed food. She goes on to emphasize the need to cut down red meat, particularly for women who have myomas and endometriosis. “Limit sugars, fats, salt, and alcohol,” she adds. “To manage stress, get massages, do yoga, exercise, and take calcium and vitamin supplements.”

The more we know, the less we downplay the severity of what most women go through on a monthly basis. Our lives shouldn’t be limited by our menstrual cycles, but by understanding our phases—we can make our cycles work for us.

MINDSET OVER MELTDOWN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 163

REAL WELLNESS STARTS WITH THE MIND

In recent years, Tajonera has seen a major shift in how people view mental health in sports—and beyond. “Ten years ago, not a lot of athletes or families reached out about sports psychology,” he says. “But today, more people understand that mental strength is as important as physical strength. It’s finally being treated as part of wellness, not weakness.”

He adds: “The most common mental issues I’ve seen are the fear of making mistakes and the pressure of living up to expectations—whether their own or from others.” And these aren’t just athlete problems. In fact, the emotional strain of everyday life—career decisions, family responsibilities, social comparison—can feel just as intense.

Dy agrees. “Mental struggles are real and normal. Everybody goes through them, and sometimes, we just need someone to talk to. We have to normalize seeking help.”

As Dy, Catantan, and Chan all show in different ways, mental resilience isn’t reserved for athletes—it’s a form of emotional wellness anyone can cultivate. It lives in the quiet rituals, the perspective shifts, the decision to reach out when you need help. It’s in learning how to show up for yourself with care, even on the tough days.

Because no matter the field you play on—court, office, classroom, or home—your mind is your most powerful teammate.

MSTANDRET/ENVATO IMAGES

THE SILENT EPIDEMIC

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 165

Though they don’t always disclose their caloric intake, it doesn’t take rocket science to see that these “wellness-centric” What I Eat In A Day videos show women ingesting no more than 800 calories a day, 700 calories below the latest Philippine FDA-recommended daily caloric intake for women from 2015.

On the other hand, families can impose disordered eating habits, though well meaning. “Fatphobia” can also start at home, as a combination of upbringing and cultural norms. Severely controlling a child’s diet can foster disordered eating patterns, such as obsessive calorie counting and an unhealthy fear of “bad foods.”

Yassin goes on to discuss how, at home, “there are lots of messages associated with body size, and quite often, we find that parents and people in the family have their own quite significant issues with food and body.” Many Asian families seeking help from Yassin also often downplay the severity of eating disorders. There is a prevailing belief that these issues can’t be that critical when affected family members are still high-functioning individuals and otherwise appear successful.

RETHINKING TREATMENT

In the Philippines, there’s a growing recognition of the need for structured interventions, as exemplified by the proposed Eating Disorders Awareness Prevention and Education Act (or Gustavo Tambunting’s House Bill No. 4318), which aims to involve key government agencies in a more comprehensive, research-driven approach to prevention and treatment.

Dr. Parker-Serviento screens eating disorders routinely, and she notices how the digital age has ushered in a sense of openness in discussing eating disorders both online and in person. “[Patients] are ready to express their fears and confusion, and listen to advice and agree to suggestions in terms of intervention,” she says. “Often, before they come in for consultation, they have already looked for and searched online and have already diagnosed themselves.” When diagnosed early enough, Dr. Parker-Serviento provides interventions depending on the patient’s condition. More severe symptoms require co-managing with psychiatrists.

At The Wave Clinic, one of the very few centers dedicated to treating eating disorders in Southeast Asia, Yassin’s team of doctors, nurses, chefs, dietitians, and holistic specialists offer a variety of interventions, ranging from in-patient family interventions and therapy rooted in the arts to a combination of medication and psychotherapy. Yassin also advocates for recovery coaching from coaches “who are quite often people with lived experience or can provide peer support,” which she believes is truly important, emphasizing that “current literature suggests that having lived experience on a treatment team is really beneficial for young people in instilling hope and decreasing stigma.” Still, Yassin believes that treatment for eating disorders has a

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lot of room for improvement, since most treatment methods are too focused on models that only work in the West.

THE PRICE OF CONTROL

Sab shows me her now-defunct "wellness" group chat. The last message was sent in 2023, and she says it's normal for EDTwt group chats to die out eventually, just as most accounts do. There's a part of me that hopes these girls logged off because they recovered, but Sab's silence and stoic visage tells me they also could have passed away. I think of *Bottoms* star Rachel Sennott's viral satirical video, where she says, "If you don't have an eating disorder, get one," and though it might've been a joke, it was definitely reflective of how eating disorders are perceived today—a trend everyone feels compelled to hop on. And with Ozempic popping up in Instagram ads and eating disorder content thriving on social media, many seem to forget why eating disorders are dangerous in the first place. Anorexia is malnourishment. It weakens your bones, shrinks your brain, slows your heartbeat, and prevents your wounds from healing. Yet, in a culture where illness has been repackaged as a symbol of control and discipline, the physical consequences remain all but invisible.

In this landscape, it's vital to remember that eating disorders are not a fleeting trend or a passing phase—they are dangerous, life-threatening conditions that require real attention. If you suspect someone you know is struggling, don't wait for them to reach out. Initiate a conversation, approach them with empathy, and encourage professional help. In the Philippines, though there are no specific medical centers that specialize in the treatment of eating disorders, some doctors have similar protocols to measures taken by Dr. Parker-Serviento, while organizations like the National Center for Mental Health provide resources for those dealing with eating disorders. Education and awareness are the first steps in dismantling the dangerous romanticization of these illnesses. It's time to recognize that the pursuit of control over one's body can never outweigh the value of life itself.

*Name has been changed

TALKING IT OUT

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 161

For Cara, seeking professional help became necessary when the burden of trauma became too much to bear alone. "Instead of carrying all the weight, I can set it down for an hour while my therapist and I look over it and figure out what's going on or what needs to be changed," she says. "And by the time I pick it up again, it feels a little more manageable." For many Filipinos, professional therapy still feels out of reach—not just because of a lingering fear of societal judgment—but also because of the cost. Thankfully, platforms like MindNation, Empath, and Kindred are offering more accessible services, showing that mental health support doesn't have to be a luxury. "I am happy to see that there is now a shift in the way Filipinos perceive mental health," says Calipara. "The increasing acceptance of therapy signifies progress, because it provides a safe space for individuals to work through their emotions in a way that is both validating and transformative." As mental health care becomes more accessible, Filipinos are learning to embrace a form of healing that isn't new at all—it's rooted in usap, in community, in human connection. Whether in clinics or carinderias, with counselors or confidantes, talking it out might just be the most Filipino thing we can do. Because the path to healing doesn't begin with silence. It starts with a single voice saying, "Pwede bang magkwento?"

*Name has been changed

THE FILIPINO NOW

CONTINUATION OF CREDITS

Opening spread clothing credits: Mark Bumgarner Blazer and Trousers and Tiffany and Co. Necklace (Bretman Rock). Dennis Lustico Top and Cartier Pavé Cushion Ring (Heart Evangelista).

THE BEAUTY OF BROWN

CONTINUATION OF CREDITS

Opening spread clothing credits: Martin Bautista (Tweetie de Leon-Gonzalez, Wilma Doesnt, Iza Calzado). RSVP (Agot Isidro). Just Bonita (Mylene Dizon). Rajo Laurel (Bianca Gonzalez). Emilia Atelier (Angel Aquino). Props: Geof Gonzales.

PAINTED FEELINGS

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Photographer's assistant: Julius Albao and Kieffer Carascal. Makeup assistant: Alyssa Bugna. Hair assistant: Lea Luna and John Alrey Valencia. Styling assistant: Niña Cuyana of Qurator Studio.

THE FUTURE OF FILIPINO BEAUTY

CONTINUATION OF CREDITS

Sunnies co-founders makeup and hair credits: Makeup: Janica Cleto (Martine Ho, Georgina Wilson) and Lei Ponce (Bea Soriano-Dee, Jessica Wilson). Hair: Jaaron Go (Soriano-Dee and Jessica Wilson) and Carlo Roblico (Ho, Georgina Wilson).

PHOTO: **KIERAN PUNAY**

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10 *Key* MOMENTS

IN PHILIPPINE ***BEAUTY*** HISTORY

A timeline of moments within the local beauty zeitgeist from 1991 to the early 2020s. **BY MARBBIE TAGABUCBA**

1994: MORENA SKIN MAKES IT TO BEAUTY ADS

Brown-skinned actress and accomplished equestrian Mikee Conjuangco became an endorser for skin care brand Eskinol, dismantling decades of the fair-skinned beauty ideal.

1995: MODERN AESTHETIC PROCEDURES ARRIVE IN THE PHILIPPINES

Dr. Vicki Belo's Belo Medical Group revolutionized the local beauty industry by opening the first accredited ambulatory cosmetic "surgi-center" in the country. The phrase "Nagpa-Belo siya!" ("She got Belo'd!") made its way into everyday vernacular.

2004: LONG, STRAIGHT HAIR BECOMES THE STANDARD

Jaja and Boomboom Gonzales—known collectively as the JaBoom Twins—were featured in a commercial for shampoo brand Rejoice, starting a trend of long, straight hair that was described as "sumusunod sa galaw ko" ("moves with my every move"). The real winners were salons, which saw a surge in hair-rebonding treatments.

2005: THE FILIPINA SUPERMODEL DOMINATES INTERNATIONAL FASHION

Decades after Anna Bayle ruled the fashion capitals, Charo Ronquillo placed third in the Supermodel of the World Finals in New York and appeared in major campaigns worldwide, paving the way for morena models to thrive in the industry. In 2011, Danica Magpantay won the award.

2013: MASSTIGE F-BEAUTY IS BORN

In a market dominated by drugstore and high-end cosmetics, makeup brand Happy Skin distinguished themselves with their skin care ingredients, mid-range price point, and aspirational branding, setting a precedent for F-beauty powerhouses. Notable later launches include Sunnies Face in 2018 and Issy & Co. (now Issy) in 2019.

2015: THE MISS UNIVERSE CROWN RETURNS TO THE PHILIPPINES

Pia Wurtzbach brought home the crown after 42 years (Margie Moran was the last Filipino Miss Universe in 1973), inspiring generations to never give up on their dreams. In 2018, Catriona Gray became the fourth Filipino to win Miss Universe for the Philippines.

2016: #PROUDMORENA GAINS TRACTION ONLINE

Host Bianca Gonzalez called out an online bully for calling her six-month-old morena daughter "ugly," starting a conversation that included educating brands and posting celebratory selfies. The hashtag now has over 100,000 posts collectively on Instagram and Facebook.

2018: KULOT AND PROUD OF IT

The Curly Girl Method by New York hairstylist Lorraine Massey goes viral, empowering more curly-haired Filipinas to embrace their natural hair texture. RIP to the outdated saying "pag kulot, salot" ("curly hair is cursed").

2021: F-BEAUTY GOES GLOBAL

The pandemic accelerated digitization, making Filipino brands more accessible overseas. Pili Ani was the first local brand to join *Allure US*' Best of Beauty Box in 2021. Sunnies Face became the first Filipino brand awarded with the *Allure US* Best of Beauty Awards' red seal as Fluffmatte in Major won Best Matte Lipstick of 2022.

2025: *ALLURE* LAUNCHES IN THE PHILIPPINES

Beauty continues to grow in parallel with the influencer industry, opening up the table for inclusive conversation. This also means it is becoming increasingly unregulated, and consumers are demanding for greater transparency. *Allure Philippines* launches at a pivotal time, bringing in 30 years of beauty journalism expertise as a trusted voice in the local industry.

THE MEGA ARCHIVES

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*Editor's Note: Rissa Mananquil Trillo, Editor in Chief of *Allure Philippines*, co-founded Happy Skin in 2013 but officially exited the brand after eight years in 2021. She has had no involvement in the brand since her departure.

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Words MATTER

The beauty terms we're leaving behind and why. **BY BIANCA GOZON**

Conversations around beauty are shifting, and *Allure* is taking the lead by ditching vocabulary that we're seeing as harmful or simply unnecessary in how we speak about ourselves. "Anti-aging," "whitening," "bad or good hair day," and "diet" (as a verb)—when it comes to describing people and products, we're keeping these terms out of writing and making the commitment to no longer normalize them.

COLLAGE: ANDREA QUINTOS

Anti-aging

When we talk about aging, the customary response is to list all that you're doing to keep it from happening—as if we're terrified of the very normal, very inevitable moment when wrinkles start forming. But aging is life's natural course, not something we need to fear or fight. That's why back in September 2017, *Allure* made the bold decision to no longer publish the word "anti-aging." As recent as January 2025, in an *Allure US* article, we're pushing the conversation even further by embracing the word "old." A story headlined *Old Lady Energy Flexed Its Well-Toned Muscles at the Golden Globes*—meant to reclaim positivity and appreciate the complexity that comes with age—sparked a full-on debate online with opinions split down in the middle. It begs the question: What about being old is so offensive? Lines are badges of honor from a life lived. Crow's feet and nasolabial folds are what laughter leaves behind. Why don't we start seeing aging as a gift?

Whitening

For years, we've been conditioned to think that naturally brown or dark skin is not enough. The culprit? Whitening products and the triggering ads that parrot its agenda. The word "whitening" still carries the heavy weight of outdated beauty standards, insistently burdening us with the thought that having lighter skin is the key to a better life. But the term is way past retirement. If we flipped the script and simply described skin for the color it is, we're focusing on what we already have—whether morena or fair. The shift in language is simple, yet powerful.

Diet (as a verb)

Dieting, synonymous with needing to lose weight, gets thrown around easily by Pinoys especially during special occasions, which always revolve heavily around food. Think about the familiar quip "Mag-diet ka na nga" during reunions, Christmas, or fiestas. In *Allure Philippines*, you'll find us using the word diet as a noun, going back to its original meaning as food and as a source of nourishment. Diets should be thought of as sustenance, not restriction, and definitely not as a means to guilt us into meeting standards that aren't our own.

Bad (and Good) Hair Day

Everybody's hair is different, and every day it's different. Some days, it likes to be wild and free like a rockstar; other days, it's calm and collected like a tea-sipping yoga instructor. Hair doesn't wake up and decides to be bad or good. It just exists, and it doesn't define how meaningful our days can be. Straight, curly, frizz, or wavy—hair is hair, not a challenge that needs to be managed, and there's no shame in just letting it do its thing.

Tinted Fling
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the Power of *FIRSTS*

For the past three decades, *Allure* has been at the forefront of beauty journalism. These iconic covers pushed beauty beyond boundaries.

BY BIANCA GOZON

Helen Mirren

THE FIRST WOMAN OVER 70 ON THE COVER

AUGUST 2017

THE BEAUTY EXPERT
allure
Hot Dame!
Helen Mirren Is the Hero We Need
7 Things That Get Better With Age
Your Favorite Products What Are You Really Paying For?
the end of anti-AGING
OUR CALL TO THE INDUSTRY

Helen Mirren fronts *Allure*, championing the magazine's movement to ban the term "anti-aging." Never one to conform, she defies industry norms by consciously handpicking roles that break the mold of age-typical casting. Helen proves from every performance that power, beauty, and relevance don't come with an expiration date. As the face of this pivotal issue, she doesn't just embrace aging—she redefines it, making it clear that it isn't a weakness but a power unapologetically earned. "If people treat me like the age I am, I get absolutely insulted, really cross. I hate when people give up their seat for me. No, no, no. I don't want your seat," Helen shares.

THE BEAUTY EXPERT
allure
Billy Porter Takes the Lead
Museum-Worthy Nail Art
SKIN REPORT Sculpting With Needles
+ The Season's Coolest Color
THE ART OF BEAUTY

Billy Porter

THE FIRST MAN ON THE COVER

JANUARY 2020

Billy Porter has never been one to color inside the lines, fearlessly parading his extravagant outfits and makeup looks. *Allure*'s January 2020 issue, with Billy as the first male cover star, showed the world that strength isn't about fitting into a mold, but breaking out of it. After being told he was one of the many reasons Black cishet men felt emasculated, Billy realized his self-expression carried weight—and instead of backing down, he stepped further into his truth. For years, people tried to box him in, claiming he wasn't "masculine enough." But he broke free and used his art as a weapon to make a change. "I know exactly what I'm here for," says Billy. "And that is power."

Halima Aden

THE FIRST HIJABI COVER MODEL

JUNE 2017

THE BEAUTY EXPERT
allure
Meet Halima
Muslim. Model. Destroyer of Stereotypes.
This Is American BEAUTY
The Faces, the Nail Art, the Mascara, and Everything Beautiful About the United States in 2017

From the moment she walked down the stage of the Miss Minnesota USA pageant adorned in a modest bikini, Halima Aden—the first hijab-wearing cover star of *Allure*—blazed a trail for more hijabi representation. Her cover wasn't just a first for *Allure*—it was also a first for any major US-based magazine. For Halima, wearing a hijab isn't just a choice—it's a celebration of her identity and faith. She's here to set her foot down and say that expressing yourself through beauty and fashion is for *everyone*—including Muslim women. "Society puts so much pressure on girls to look a certain way," Halima says. "I have much more to offer than my physical appearance."

MIRREN: SCOTT TRINDLE. PORTER: BEN HASSETT. ADEN: SØLVE SUNDSBØ.

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